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WINTER 2019 | VOLUME 41 | NUMBER 6 | THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE HALL OF FAME

NATIONAL BASEBALL
HALL OF FAME

Roy Halladay

2019 INDUCTEE



MEMORIES *and Dreams*

The Official Magazine of the Hall of Fame

THE NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME
AND MUSEUM

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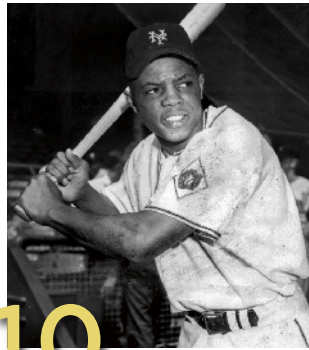
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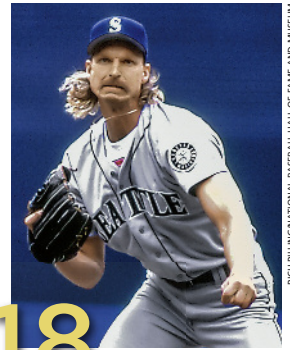
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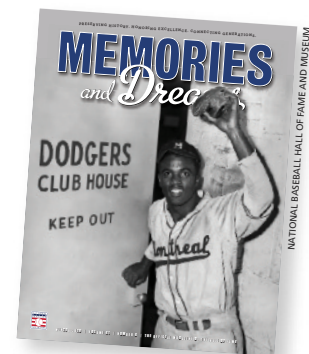
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NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

ON THE COVER

In 1947, Jackie Robinson broke
Major League Baseball's color
barrier. That season, he also made
history as the first MLB Rookie
of the Year. A version of the
original black and white photo
that has been colorized by
ManCave Pictures is shown on the
cover of *Memories and Dreams*.

FROM THE PRESIDENT > TIM MEAD



While election to the Hall of Fame serves as the fulfillment of a lifetime of talent and dedication, making it to the big leagues is the fulfillment of a childhood dream. Though we remember them as giants, every player in the Hall of Fame was once a rookie.

During my 40 years with the Los Angeles Angels, I had the pleasure to work with 748 different ballplayers, witnessing firsthand so many magical moments for the team and those individuals. Among them were Hall of Famers accomplishing tremendous feats in the latter stages of their careers: Don Sutton winning his 300th career game at 41 years old, Dave Winfield hitting for the cycle at age 39 and Reggie Jackson leading the team to a pair of division championships in his late 30s and early 40s.

But it was just as rewarding, if not more so, to work with the rookies. With each young player comes a fresh set of eyes from which to view the game and what makes our National Pastime so special – the next generation of ballplayers, full of awe and potential, who may, decades later, become Hall of Famers themselves.

There was the trio of Rookie of the Year winners I had the opportunity to work with – Tim Salmon, Mike Trout and Shohei Ohtani, all of whom started their careers with a flourish, performing on the field while managing the range of emotions – from anxiety to nervousness and anticipation – that all first-year players experience.

No two players follow the same exact career path. Salmon was 23 years old when he made his big league debut three years after being drafted out of college. Trout moved from high school to the majors in two years, debuting at

age 19. Ohtani, a 23-year-old two-way player from Japan, had the task of debuting twice, first as designated hitter and then three days later as the starting pitcher. Different paths led to similar success, and each man was a joy to work with.

Some players pay their dues in the minor leagues for a long time before breaking through, such as 30-year-old southpaw Tim Lincecum in 1992, or catcher Francisco Arcia, who made his first major league appearance last year at 28 years old and saw immediate success, registering a record 10 RBI in his first two games.

No matter how many years they put into their baseball journeys, I always found it particularly enjoyable to work with the rookies. There is a special feeling that accompanies the congratulatory

handshake following a player's major league debut when you've watched him develop through the farm system and helped guide him through his first Spring Training.

Veteran players constantly remind rookies that their goal should not be to simply make it to the big leagues, but to put forth the daily effort and commitment to remain there. Each of those players had prepared for years – with countless games from youth to the minors and endless hours of training – to have the opportunity to prove himself as a major league rookie. After reaching that plateau, each looked forward to a career that would eventually allow them to shed the “rookie” designation.

Mere months after joining the incredible staff at the Hall of Fame, I can't shake the feeling that, after 40 years in baseball, I have entered a rookie season of my own. I reflect anew upon the experiences and emotions of Salmon, Trout, Ohtani and the countless other ballplayers I witnessed achieve the dream of reaching the majors, as well as those who were able to harness their immense rookie potential, follow the instruction of coaches and managers and forge a path to Cooperstown.

As my rookie year continues, I continue to lean on the advice of my new colleagues, the Hall of Famers who have supported me in this new position, and savor the potential of what lies ahead. 🍌

Hall of Fame President Tim Mead (right), then with the Los Angeles Angels, poses with 2018 American League Rookie of the Year Shohei Ohtani.



BLAINE OHGASHI/LOS ANGELES ANGELS

SHORT HOPS

@BaseballHall

For more information and news from the Hall of Fame, visit baseballhall.org.

Hall of Fame Classic scheduled for May 23

Cooperstown welcomes the return of one of its newest traditions on Saturday, May 23, with the 12th edition of the Hall of Fame Classic, presented by Ford Motor Company. The Hall of Fame Classic will be played on the Saturday before Memorial Day, with family-friendly activities all weekend long.

The Classic will take place in Cooperstown and feature several Hall of Famers (to be announced in early 2020) along with players representing all 30 big league teams. The full weekend of events includes the Hall of Fame Classic Weekend Golf Tournament, the *Night at the Museum* meet-and-greet following the Classic and the pregame Home Run Derby.

Hall of Fame featured in 'The Great Courses'

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum has teamed up with The Great Courses to tell the story of baseball, which dates back hundreds of years.

In 24 online lectures that paint a portrait of the sport's remarkable past, taking you from the decades before the Civil War to the pivotal year of 1920, *Play Ball! The Rise of Baseball as America's Pastime* strikes a perfect balance between sports lore and cultural history.

For more information, please visit TheGreatCourses.com/5BHOE.

A look behind the curtain in Cooperstown

The Hall of Fame's Custom Tour Experience offers a behind-the-scenes experience that makes for a great getaway for individuals, couples and families, or a unique holiday gift for a special baseball fan in your life.

Participants will enjoy a personalized visit focusing on artifacts from their favorite club not currently on display, along with a special team-focused guided tour of the Museum. The Custom Tour Experience is available for booking between Labor Day and Memorial Day on Mondays through Fridays (excluding holidays) for up to four people per booking.

Available exclusively through Cooperstown accommodations, you can plan your trip at baseballhall.org/custom-tour-experience. For more information, please call (607) 547-0249 or email sales@baseballhall.org.

Give the gift of a VIP Experience

Fans have the opportunity to explore the Hall of Fame through a special program designed to give Cooperstown visitors a VIP Experience. The Museum has partnered with Cooperstown accommodations to offer this unique package, which features behind-the-scenes experiences at the Museum, including: a Hall of Fame Sustaining Membership (\$125 value); exclusive after-hours access to the Museum on Thursday evening; a Library archive tour; a Museum collections artifact presentation; and concludes with a private late-afternoon reception with light refreshments served.

This package is a great way to learn more about the Museum and baseball history, whether this is your first or your 50th visit to Cooperstown. The VIP Experience is only available for purchase through select Cooperstown Chamber of Commerce accommodations.

For more info and a list of participating accommodations, visit the Hall of Fame website at baseballhall.org/visit/vip-experience. Dates for 2020 packages include March 12-13, April 16-17, Sept. 10-11 and Nov. 5-6.

STAFF SELECTIONS



Name: Michelle Wickwire

Position: Payroll & Benefits Associate

Hall of Fame Experience:

Debuted June 1, 1994

Hometown: Cherry Valley, N.Y.

Favorite Museum Artifact: The 1962 Yankees baseball. My name is Michelle because of Mickey Mantle. My father wanted to name me Mickey, but my grandmother was adamant that you couldn't name a girl Mickey. She said you can call her Michelle and nickname her Mickey, but that nickname never stuck. My brother got the honor five years later.

Memorable Museum Moment:

My first memorable moment was after being here one week, I got to meet the rock singer Meat Loaf. My best baseball moments were the 2007 Induction crowds, with all the fans for Cal Ripken and Tony Gwynn, and then in 2010, driving Hank Aaron in the inaugural *Parade of Legends*.

MEMORIAL AND HONORARY GIFTS

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Candidates on Call

Derek Jeter debuts on 2020 Baseball Writers' Association of America Hall of Fame ballot.

BY CRAIG MUDER

He was the face of a dynasty, the player who brought the Yankees back to World Series glory after an absence of almost two decades.

Today, Derek Jeter stands on the precipice of the game's highest honor: The Hall of Fame.

Jeter is scheduled to debut on the Baseball Writers' Association of America Hall of Fame ballot in 2020 – along with additional players whose final year in the big leagues was 2014. Jeter had a taste of Induction Weekend in 2019 when he attended the *Induction Ceremony* that featured his former Yankees teammates Mike Mussina and Mariano Rivera, who joined Harold

Baines, Roy Halladay, Edgar Martinez and Lee Smith as the Hall of Fame's Class of 2019.

Now, Jeter waits to learn if he is part of the Class of 2020.

A 14-time All-Star who finished in the Top 10 of American League Most Valuable Player Award voting eight times, Jeter played all 20 of his major league seasons with the Yankees – helping New York advance to the Postseason 17 times. Each of his 2,674 games in the field came at shortstop.

A five-time Gold Glove Award winner and the 1996 AL Rookie of the Year recipient, Jeter ranks sixth all-time in hits (3,465), 11th in runs (1,923) and 23rd in total bases



BRAD MANGEN/NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY

Curt Schilling will appear on the BBWAA Hall of Fame ballot for the eighth time in 2020. Among those returning to the ballot, Schilling led all 2019 candidates by receiving votes on 60.9 percent of all ballots cast.



MODERN BASEBALL ERA COMMITTEE VOTES IN DECEMBER

The Modern Baseball Era Committee will consider Hall of Fame candidates this fall, with eligible candidates including players, managers, umpires and executives whose most indelible contribution to the game came from 1970 through 1987.

The Modern Baseball Era Committee last considered candidates in the fall of 2017 when Jack Morris and Alan Trammell were elected.

The 10-person ballot was constructed by the Baseball Writers' Association of America's Historical Overview Committee. The Modern Baseball Era Committee will consist of 16 voting members, and candidates must receive at least 75 percent of the vote to earn election to the Hall of Fame.

The ballot consists of Dwight Evans, Steve Garvey, Tommy John, Don Mattingly, Marvin Miller, Thurman Munson, Dale Murphy, Dave Parker, Ted Simmons and Lou Whitaker.

The results of the Modern Baseball Era Committee vote will be announced Dec. 8 live on MLB Network from Baseball's Winter Meetings in San Diego.

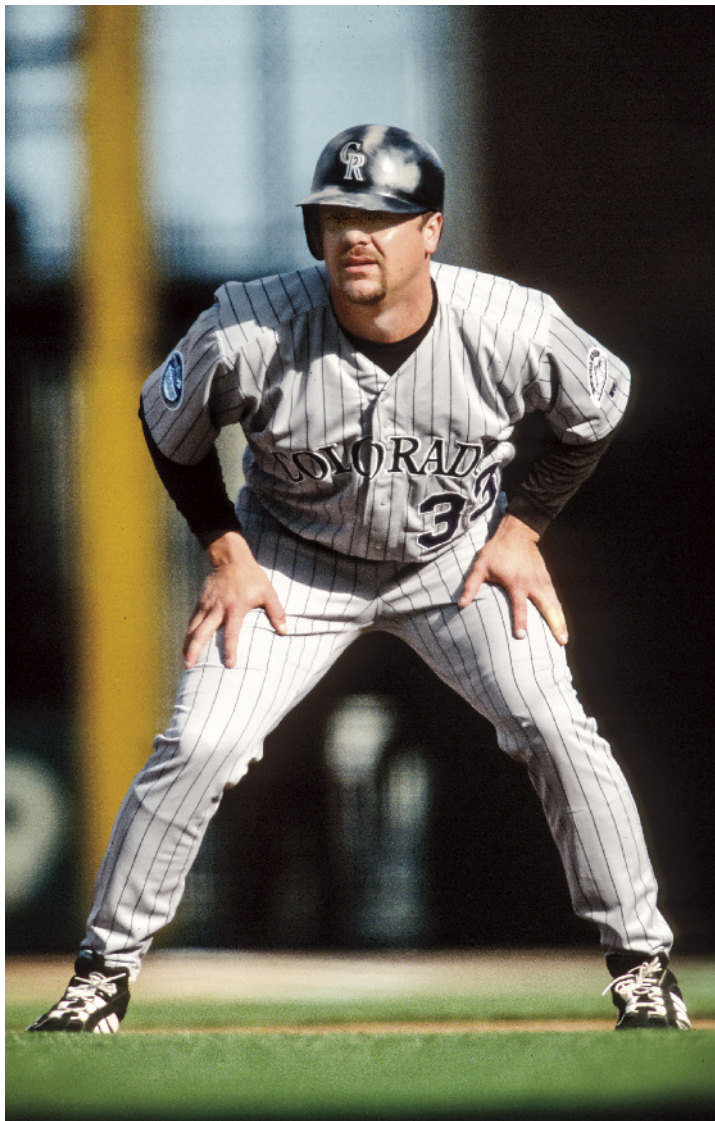
(4,921). He also totaled the equivalent of one full regular season in the Postseason, appearing in 158 games while amassing 200 hits, 111 runs scored, 20 homers, 61 RBI and a .308 batting average – numbers nearly identical to his 162-game averages for his career.

Jeter led the Yankees to five world championships and seven AL pennants, winning World Series MVP honors in 2000.

Other first-time candidates eligible for the 2020 BBWAA ballot include Bobby Abreu, Jason Giambi, Paul Konerko, Cliff Lee and Alfonso Soriano.

The 2020 BBWAA ballot will also feature 14 returning players from 2019, including Curt Schilling, Roger Clemens, Barry Bonds and Larry Walker – each of whom were named on more than 50 percent of all ballots cast last year.

Schilling received votes on 60.9 percent of ballots cast in his seventh appearance on the



Left: Derek Jeter played 2,674 games in the field over 20 seasons with the Yankees – each one at shortstop. Jeter becomes eligible for Hall of Fame consideration for the first time in 2020. **Right:** Larry Walker will appear on the BBWAA Hall of Fame ballot for the 10th-and-final time in 2020. Walker received votes on 54.6 percent of ballots cast in 2019.

BBWAA ballot, leaving him eligible three more times if he continues to receive at least five percent of the vote and is not elected (which requires 75 percent of the vote). One of only five pitchers with at least 3,000 strikeouts and fewer than 1,000 walks, Schilling was named the 2001 World Series co-MVP with Hall of Famer Randy Johnson and owns an 11-2 mark with a 2.23 ERA in 19 career Postseason appearances. He won 216 regular-season games over 20 seasons with the Orioles, Astros, Phillies, Diamondbacks and Red Sox.

Clemens, a seven-time Cy Young Award winner, was the 1986 AL MVP and was selected to 11 All-Star Games. Clemens received votes on a career-best 59.5 percent of ballots cast in 2019, his seventh time on the BBWAA ballot. A two-time World Series champion with the Yankees (1999-2000), Clemens – who pitched

for the Red Sox, Blue Jays, Yankees and Astros across his 24 MLB seasons – led his league in earned-run average seven times.

Bonds, baseball's all-time home run leader with 762, was named on 59.1 percent of ballots cast last year – his best showing in seven years on the BBWAA ballot. A seven-time NL MVP and an eight-time Gold Glove Award winner, Bonds – who played 22 seasons with the Pirates and Giants – set MLB single-season records for home runs (73 in 2001) and walks (232 in 2004). He led the NL in on-base percentage 10 times and paced the league in batting average twice.

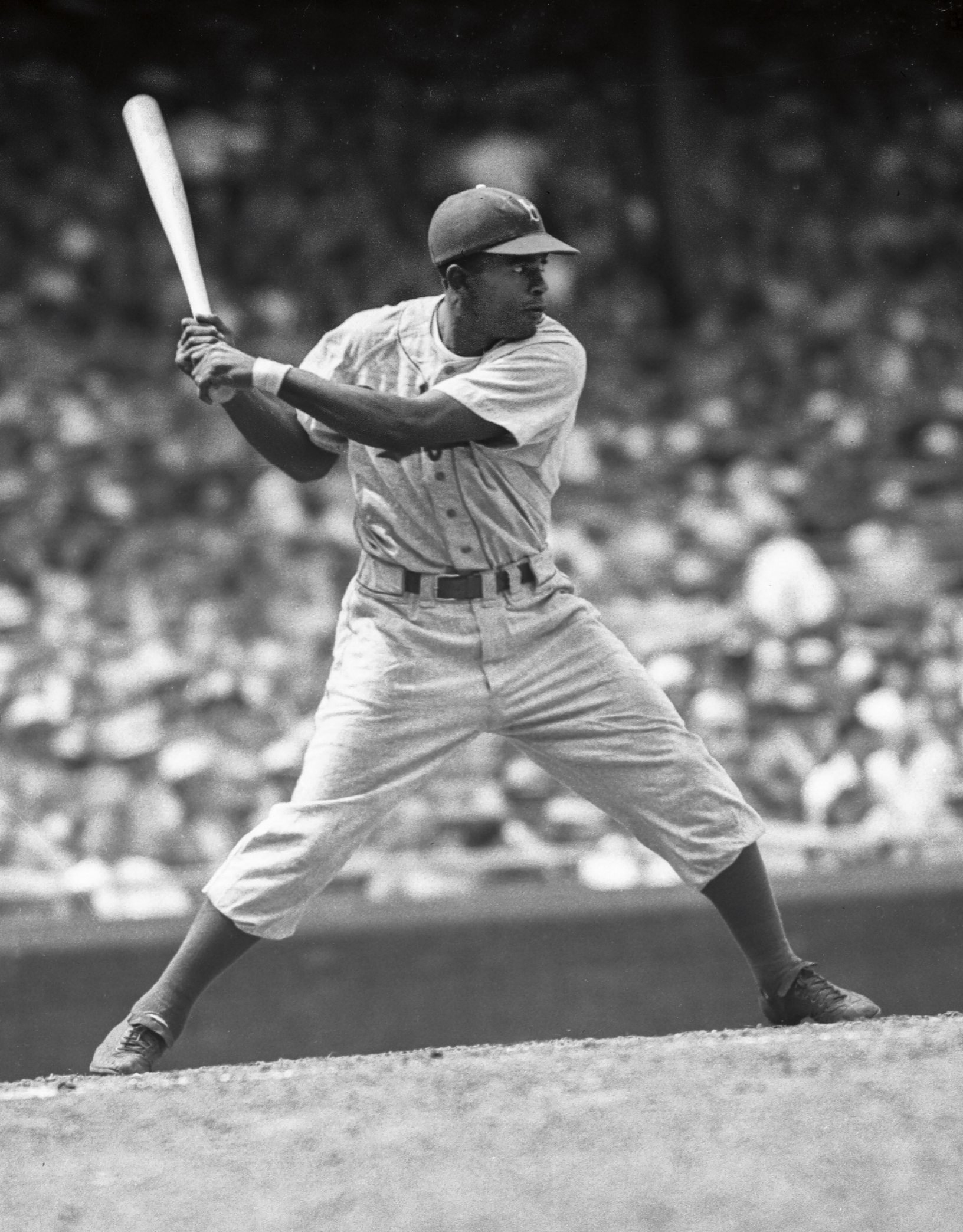
Walker returns to the BBWAA ballot for his 10th-and-final time in 2020 after being named on a career-best 54.6 percent of ballots cast in 2019. The 1997 NL MVP, Walker led his league in batting average three times, won seven Gold

Glove Awards for his play in right field and was named to five All-Star Games. Over 17 seasons with the Expos, Rockies and Cardinals, Walker compiled a .565 slugging percentage (12th all-time) and a .965 OPS (15th all-time).

Other players returning to the BBWAA ballot in 2020 include (with 2019 voting percentages in parenthesis): Omar Vizquel (42.8), Manny Ramirez (22.8), Jeff Kent (18.1), Scott Rolen (17.2), Billy Wagner (16.7), Todd Helton (16.5), Gary Sheffield (13.6), Andy Pettitte (9.9), Sammy Sosa (8.5) and Andruw Jones (7.5).

The results of the 2020 BBWAA Hall of Fame vote will be announced Jan. 21 live on MLB Network. 📺

Craig Muder is the director of communications for the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.



JACKIE'S ROOKIE SEASON

IN 1947, JACK ROOSEVELT ROBINSON BECAME THE FIRST WINNER OF THE BBWAA'S ROOKIE OF THE YEAR AWARD – AND ACCOMPLISHED SO MUCH MORE.

BY CLAIRE SMITH

Alfred Surratt would never tell where, along the way, he was dubbed “Slick.” It was a Kansas City Monarchs thing, a Negro Leagues thing, a baseball thing.

Brothers to the core, the men of the Monarchs kept one another's confidences, watched one another's backs, mourned teammates' losses and failed dreams, and cheered on their brothers' – and sisters' – achievements.

Never were the cheers louder, said Slick Surratt, then on April 11, 1947, the day Branch Rickey and the Brooklyn Dodgers signed Jackie Robinson, a one-time Monarch, to a major league contract.

Like so many Negro Leagues players who lived in the Kansas City area, Surratt was an auto assembly plant worker. The reserve outfielder, who passed away in 2010, was on the job on that historic date and, recalling the moment as if it were yesterday, said that the boisterous, instantaneous celebration spread through the plant as if on the assembly line.

The entire world had V-E Day; African Americans who'd dreamed of living long enough to see segregation eradicated now had a second Independence Day.

The joy within the black baseball community was palpable. The destruction of segregation within Major League Baseball was at hand. Four days later, on April 15, 1947, Robinson would debut with the Dodgers, his first step onto Ebbets Field in Brooklyn tromping out the National Pastime's odious color barrier forever.

As we all now know, it wasn't just signing on to be a baseball player. Those opposed to integration would push back, virulently, viciously, unrelentingly. Robinson, a former Army officer and one of the greatest athletes to come out of UCLA, was about to meet his greatest opponent: Jim Crow. And he would be asked to do so pretty much on his own. One black man against a nation in which large swaths were steeped in segregationist policies.

Raised in California, Robinson and his bride would be asked to step into hostile territory where racism was not only codified by gentlemen's

agreements, but mandated by law. The ugly cultural divide they were about to experience was not only enforced by men wearing badges, but also by nightriders hidden beneath hoods and wearing sheets.

The Dodgers and Robinson, daring to change in 1947 what legislatures, Congress and presidents had failed to do before – or after – the Civil War, knew both the risks and the responsibilities. Yet the man who carried the hopes of so many Slick Surratts, Hank Aarons and Willie Mayses never shirked. Incredibly, Robinson not only authored one of the most impressive inaugural seasons the game had ever seen, he also gave lessons in heroism each and every day he stepped onto a major league field.

For the record, the first time Robinson stepped on such a field was on that April 15 in 1947; the 28-year-old debuted against the Boston Braves before more than 25,000 fans at Ebbets Field. He played first base and went 0-for-3 at the plate. One hundred and fifty games later, Robinson had authored the first chapter of what was destined to be a Hall of Fame career.

Likely no other player ever traveled quite so treacherous a path to the Hall as did Robinson. In an article printed in *The New York Times* on May 10, 1947, it was revealed that Robinson had received “threatening letters of anonymous origin” from the day he'd broken into the big leagues that spring. Said the un-bylined report: “This disclosure followed on the heels of a report that a strike of opposing players against the Negro player had been spiked.

“Harassment of Robinson, the first of his race to make the major league grade in modern baseball history, by unidentified persons was confirmed in Philadelphia last night by Branch Rickey, president of the Brooklyn Baseball Club. ‘At least two letters of a nature that I felt called for investigation were received by Robinson,’ Rickey said.

“Robinson himself admitted receiving several such letters. ... A high police official here disclosed that a letter warning Robinson to ‘get out of baseball’ had been turned over to the police department by the baseball club for investigation.”



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

Jackie Robinson became the first African-American player to appear in a modern big league game when he debuted for the Brooklyn Dodgers on April 15, 1947.

The article went on to describe a short-lived attempt by St. Louis Cardinals players to engineer a strike in protest against Robinson's playing that was put down by Cardinals team president Sam Breadon.

The indignities heaped on Robinson by others in baseball uniforms included spikes-high slides and head-high knockdown pitches. Racist epithets were the rule of the day. What historians came to understand was that Robinson would not, could not, lash out, because he, too, had made a gentleman's agreement, with Rickey.

In his words, in an audio recording archived by National Public Radio, Robinson said: "I remember Mr. Rickey saying to me that I couldn't fight back, and I wondered whether or not I was going to be able to do this."

Nowhere was his resolve to honor his agreement with Rickey tested more than in Robinson's first games played against the Phillies in late April at Ebbets Field. The Phillies, led by manager Ben Chapman, infamously rained an unending torrent of racist slurs on Robinson, taunting the infielder about his physical features, telling him to go back to the cotton fields and calling him the "N" word. The onslaught was so relentless and debilitating that Robinson later said it pushed him closer to breaking than any other humiliation suffered that season.

"For one wild and rage-crazed minute, I thought, 'To hell with Mr. Rickey's noble experiment,'" Robinson once recalled.

"He was physically and verbally abused, particularly when he was on the road, in certain cities," said Rachel Robinson, Jackie's wife, in an interview with *Scholastic* in 1998. "The taunts angered him, sometimes frightened him, but he turned away from them."

Said Robinson's teammate, center fielder Duke Snider: "He knew he had to do well. He knew that the future of blacks in baseball depended on it. The pressure was enormous, overwhelming and unbearable at times. I don't know how he held up. I know I never could have."

Author Jonathan Eig wrote of Robinson's brutal season in his book "Opening Day." In a 2016 interview with NPR reporter Hansi Lo Wang, Eig said the incidents with Chapman brought into focus what Robinson was being made to endure.

"It was so offensive that, for a lot of Americans, it was a wake-up call," Eig told Wang. "It made people, white people in particular, realize for the first time just what burden Robinson was shouldering."

As sportswriter Jimmy Cannon wrote: "Jackie Robinson is the loneliest man I have ever seen in sports."

Chapman would later try to explain away his actions by saying that he was bench-jockeying, and, in an effort to say he wasn't being racist, described how he also hurled ethnic slurs at Italian-American players such as Joe DiMaggio and Jewish players like Hank Greenberg. Chapman told writer Allen Barra he was doing no less with Robinson, looking for a way to rattle a rookie.

"I can imagine the possibility that both things were true," Eig said of Chapman in an interview with *The New York Times*, "that he was deeply racist and he thought that by attacking a black guy with this racist language he might make him snap, lose his composure, get the player to take the bait, get him thrown out for half a season, get him to quit."

Robinson, though stung, did not crumble.

"He knew this wasn't just symbolism," Eig told *The Times*. "He knew if he could integrate Major League Baseball, it would affect lots of people's lives. And he knew if he lashed out, he might lose the opportunity."

What Chapman could not envision was that his action eventually won Robinson sympathetic – and vocal – allies. As Eig wrote in "Opening Day," in the second game of the initial Phillies-Dodgers series, the Dodgers' Eddie Stanky, a veteran infielder and native Philadelphian, called out Chapman and the Phillies, deeming them cowards for railing against a man who could not fight back.

"It was the first time a lot of white people and white reporters in particular noticed the abuse Robinson was taking," Eig told *The Times*, adding, "I interviewed a fan who had been a teenager who went to one of those games, heard the heckling, and was shocked."

By the time the Dodgers visited Philadelphia in May, Chapman, prodded by baseball, asked to have his picture taken with Robinson. The Dodgers rookie would not shake his hand, so the two men grasped opposite ends of a baseball bat as photographers snapped away.

Off the field, many municipalities remained stubbornly unwelcoming. Even after Chapman's attempted truce, the Dodgers were not allowed to register at their chosen hotel in Philadelphia until other accommodations were made for Robinson. Sadly, this was nothing Robinson and the Dodgers had not experienced before.

Save for the Spring Trainings spent with the Dodgers in the Caribbean rather than segregated Florida and a minor league season spent in a welcoming Montreal, Robinson felt the hot breath of hate at every step



Jackie Robinson (right) accepts the J. Louis Comiskey Memorial Award from Jack Ryan, the chairman of the Chicago Chapter of the Baseball Writers' Association of America, as Major League Baseball's 1947 Rookie of the Year. Robinson hit .297 and stole a National League-leading 29 bases for the NL champion Brooklyn Dodgers.

even as he broke color barriers one ballpark, one town, one city at a time – with “Colored only/White only” signs on water fountains and public bathrooms throughout the south and meals delivered through restaurants’ back doors and eaten in solitude on the back of buses.

“He faced it in Spring Training, in every town in Florida that he visited. He faced it in Pittsburgh and St. Louis and Cincinnati,” Eig told NPR’s Wang. “I doubt that he would’ve singled out Philadelphia as the worst place in the world.”

Larry Doby, who became the second black major leaguer in the modern era when he joined the Cleveland Indians midseason in 1947, was often asked by youngsters of later generations why Robinson, he and others didn’t just refuse to leave balking hotels, movie theaters and restaurants.

“Because we didn’t want to die,” Doby told one such inquisitor during a seminar at Williams College in Massachusetts.

Yes, 1947 was that scary – and important. That Robinson not only survived but thrived during that grand experiment showed America that meritocracies had value. And his success inspired the architects of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. told Don Newcombe, Robinson’s Dodgers teammate and yet another star from the Negro Leagues: “You’ll never

know how easy you and Jackie (Robinson) and (Larry) Doby and Campy (Roy Campanella) made it for me to do my job by what you did on the baseball field.”

Thus, 72 years after 1947, we still marvel at a rookie who – by any measure – refused to fail.

Robinson, buffeted by societal ills, but steeled by the challenge to change a nation, hit .297 in 151 games that season. He stole 29 bases, more than anyone else in the National League, scored 125 runs and, with fellow future Hall of Famers Pee Wee Reese and Snider, helped Brooklyn win a National League pennant for only the second time since 1920. It would be the first of six league championships won by a Brooklyn team that featured a player Dr. King called “one of the truly great men of our nation.”

For his efforts, as well as for the example he set, Robinson received the first-ever Rookie of the Year Award by the Baseball Writers’ Association of America, an award that now bears his name. In the words of Yogi Berra, some might say that Jackie Robinson made that award necessary. 🍌

Claire Smith was the 2017 winner of the Baseball Writers’ Association of America’s J.G. Taylor Spink Award.

ENTRANCE HALL

16 ROOKIES OF THE YEAR HAVE GONE ON TO EARN HALL OF FAME ELECTION.

BY SCOTT PITONIAK

San Francisco Giants manager Bill Rigney faced a huge dilemma with about a third of the 1959 season remaining. Willie McCovey was pulverizing Pacific Coast League pitching for a second straight year, and it was obvious the towering 6-foot-4 prospect was ready for a promotion. But there was just one problem: Where to play him?

McCovey had been a first baseman all his life, but the Giants already had one of the game's premier first basemen in Orlando Cepeda, who was having another productive season a year after winning National League Rookie of the Year honors. With the Giants locked in a torrid pennant race with the Los Angeles Dodgers, this was not the time to be experimenting with a rookie at a position he wasn't familiar playing.

So, in a bold move, Rigney asked Cepeda if he would switch to left field. The man known as the "Baby Bull" preferred to stay at first, but he quickly realized the move would strengthen the team.

"Well, let's put it this way," Cepeda told *The New York Times*. "Suppose I am as good a first baseman as they say I am, but we don't win the pennant. That is not so good. Now Rigney says if we get Big Willie in the lineup, we got a great chance to win. That means I've got to move. How can a real ballplayer refuse?"

Adding McCovey to a lineup that included Cepeda and Willie Mays gave opposing pitchers a true case of the Willies. It also paid immediate dividends. In one of the best MLB debuts ever, McCovey tripled twice, singled twice, drove in two runs and scored three times off future Hall of Famer Robin Roberts as the Giants routed the Philadelphia Phillies, 7-2.

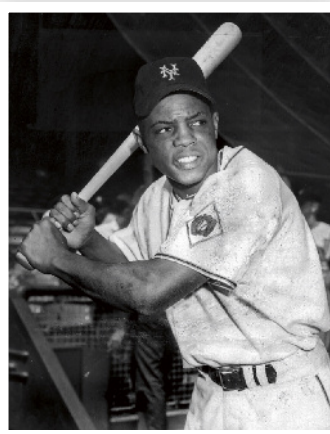
It was the start of something big as the Giants won 10 of their first 12 games with McCovey in the lineup. Although they would be edged by the Dodgers for the pennant, a star had been born, as the first-year player known as "Stretch" finished the season with 13 home runs, 38 RBI and a

.354 batting average in only 52 games. McCovey also established a franchise record for first-year players by hitting safely in 22 consecutive games. Although a small sample size, it was big enough to convince the baseball writers to vote him NL Rookie of the Year. It marked the third time that decade a Giants slugger won the award. (Mays earned the honor in 1951.)

All three of those Rookies of the Year would go on to earn induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Although ROY honors were harbingers of baseball immortality for Mays, Cepeda and McCovey, the award often isn't a good indicator that a player is Cooperstown-bound. In fact, since Jackie Robinson won the first award in 1947, it's more miss than hit, with only 16 of the 144 Rookies of the Year earning Hall of Fame enshrinement. That's a .111 batting average for those keeping score at home.

The numbers will likely improve in the coming months when former New York Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter, who was the American League Rookie of the Year in 1996, debuts on the Baseball Writers' Association of America's Hall of Fame ballot. And players such as Ichiro Suzuki (AL Rookie of the Year in 2001), Albert Pujols (NL, 2001) and Mike Trout (AL, 2012) seem on track to election when they become eligible. Still, the correlation between first-year stardom and Cooperstown plaques is low. Rarer still is the double-play occurrence of ROYs from the same year becoming Hall of Famers. That's happened just three times in 72 years, with 1956 winners Frank Robinson (NL) and Luis Aparicio (AL), 1967 winners Tom Seaver (NL) and Rod Carew (AL), and 1977 winners Andre Dawson (NL) and Eddie Murray (AL).

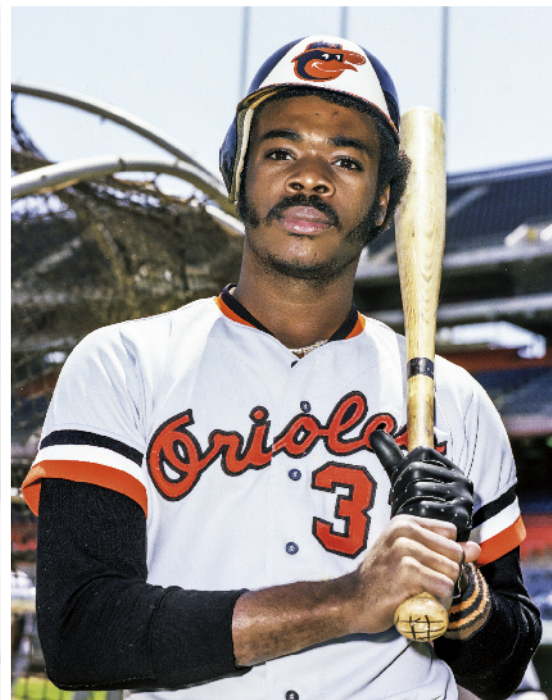
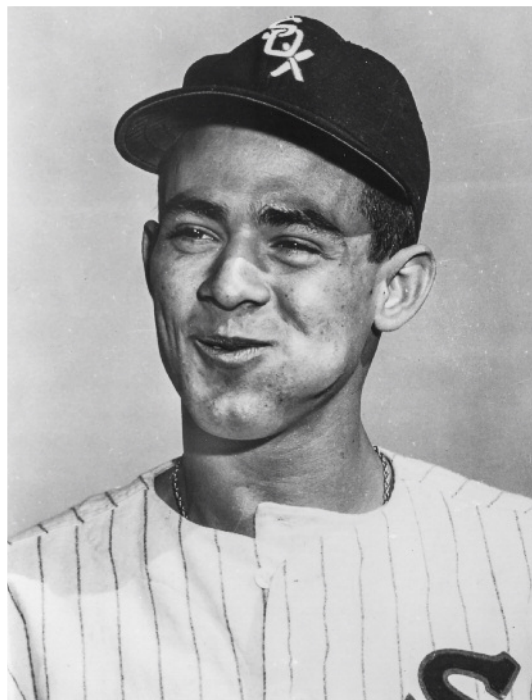
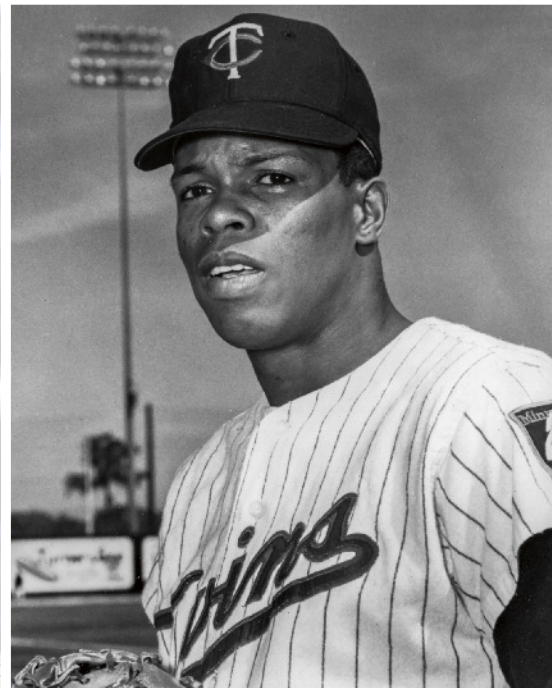
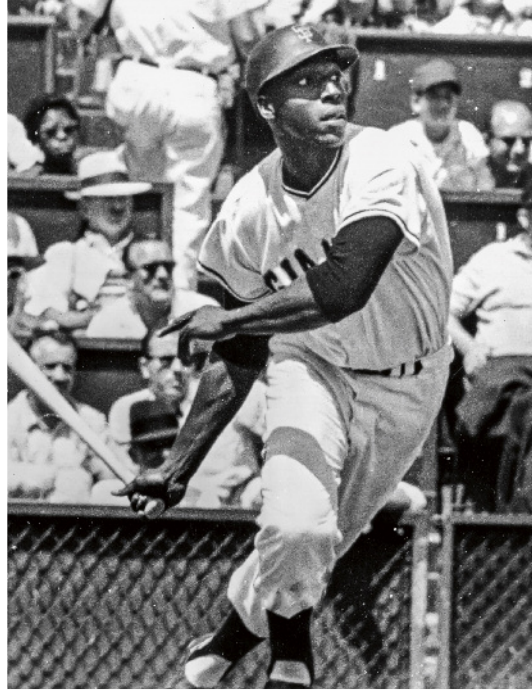
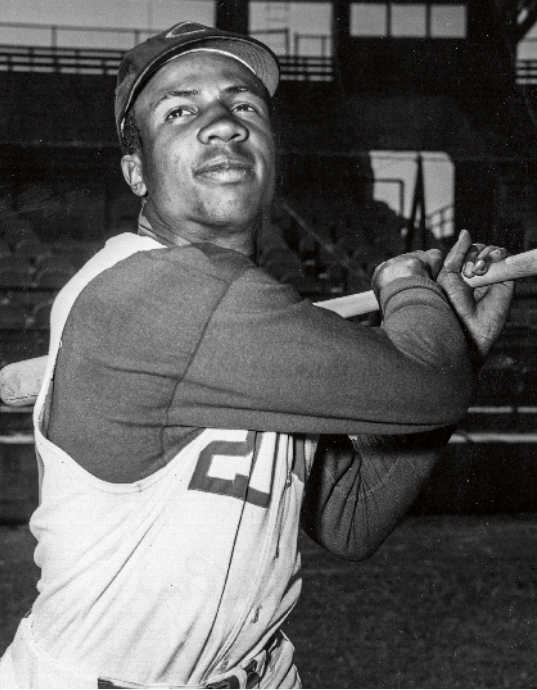
Like McCovey's debut season, Frank Robinson's was a smashing success as he tied the National League rookie home run record with 38 to go along with 83 RBI, 122 runs scored and a .290 average for the Cincinnati Reds, who posted their first winning season in a dozen years. As a result, Robinson became the first unanimous Rookie of the Year winner. That brilliant opening act clearly was a sign of things to come as Robinson



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

In 1951, Willie Mays (inset) became the second future Hall of Famer to win the Rookie of the Year Award, following Jackie Robinson in 1947. Opposite: Other future Hall of Famers who were named Rookie of the Year include (clockwise, from top left) Frank Robinson in 1956, Willie McCovey in 1959, Cal Ripken Jr. in 1982, Rod Carew in 1967, Eddie Murray in 1977, Luis Aparicio in 1956, Andre Dawson in 1977, Carlton Fisk in 1972 and Mike Piazza in 1993.

ROBINSON: LOU SAURICH/NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM; MURRAY: JOHN COBURN/NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM; PIAZZA: JOHN COBURN/NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM; ALL OTHERS BY NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM



would club 586 homers and become the first player to win Most Valuable Player awards in each league and the first African-American manager in major league history.

The year before winning his Rookie of the Year Award, Seaver spent his only season in the minors, throwing four shutouts and striking out 188 batters. His manager, Solly Hemus, told the Mets brass that Seaver had a “35-year-old head attached to a 21-year-old body” and was ready for “The Show.” The Mets agreed and the cerebral Seaver immediately became the ace of the staff, with a 2.76 ERA, 170 strikeouts and 16 wins for a team that went 60-101 in 1967. One of the highlights of that sterling season occurred in the All-Star Game when “Tom Terrific” entered the game in the 15th inning and secured the win. But being told he had won ROY topped even that moment.

“This is a bigger thrill to me than being named to the All-Star team,” he said. “You only get one chance to be Rookie of the Year. If you’re good, you can make the All-Star team several more times in your career.”

Seaver was selected to 12 All-Star teams, won 311 games and earned near unanimous induction into the Hall in 1992. Carew, that year’s AL Rookie of the Year, batted .292. That would be a modest number for him, as he ended up winning seven batting titles and was a .328 career hitter.

Few of the ROY/Hall enshrines traveled a more improbable journey or had a more auspicious first season than Mike Piazza. The Los Angeles Dodgers selected him in the 62nd round – the 1,390th pick of the 1988 MLB Draft. Defying daunting odds, Piazza hit, caught and willed his way onto the Dodgers roster in 1993, and exploded onto the scene with 35 homers, 112 RBI and a .318 batting average. Those gaudy stats made him a unanimous selection as NL Rookie of the Year, and also continued a trend begun by Dodgers legend Jackie Robinson. Eighteen Dodgers have been named ROY, twice the number of the runner-up Yankees.

Mays fashioned a legendary career in the big leagues, but unlike his teammate McCovey, the Say Hey Kid started dismally. Mays had been



Top: Andre Dawson (left) of the Expos and Eddie Murray of the Orioles are the third – and most recent – pair of future Hall of Famers to win the Rookie of the Year Award in the same season, doing so in 1977. **Bottom:** Luis Aparicio of the White Sox became the first Latin-American player to win Rookie of the Year honors when he took home the AL award in 1956. That season, Aparicio led the American League in stolen bases for the first of nine consecutive seasons.



ROOKIES OF THE YEAR INDUCTED INTO THE HALL OF FAME

1947	Jackie Robinson, Brooklyn Dodgers (inducted in 1962)
1951	Willie Mays, New York Giants (1979)
1956	Frank Robinson, Cincinnati Reds (1982)
	Luis Aparicio, Chicago White Sox (1984)
1958	Orlando Cepeda, San Francisco Giants (1999)
1959	Willie McCovey, San Francisco Giants (1986)
1961	Billy Williams, Chicago Cubs (1987)
1967	Tom Seaver, New York Mets (1992)
	Rod Carew, Minnesota Twins (1991)
1968	Johnny Bench, Cincinnati Reds (1989)
1972	Carlton Fisk, Boston Red Sox (2000)
1977	Andre Dawson, Montreal Expos (2010)
	Eddie Murray, Baltimore Orioles (2003)
1982	Cal Ripken Jr., Baltimore Orioles (2007)
1991	Jeff Bagwell, Houston Astros (2017)
1993	Mike Piazza, Los Angeles Dodgers (2016)

called up early in the 1951 season after batting .477 for the Triple-A Minneapolis Millers, and Giants manager Leo Durocher immediately put him in the lineup. The 20-year-old center fielder went hitless in five at-bats in his debut in Philadelphia and was hitless again the next day. That was followed by another 0-for-5 outing, leaving Mays distraught.

With tears streaming down his face, Mays told Durocher: “I don’t belong up here. I can’t play here. I can’t help you, Mr. Durocher. Send me back down to the minors.”

Durocher smiled, patted him on the back and told him: “Look, son, I brought you up here to do one thing. That’s to play center field. You’re the best center fielder I’ve ever seen. As long as I’m here, you’re going to play center field. Tomorrow. Next week. Next month.”

The next day, Mays’ 0-for-12 drought ended when he homered off future Hall of Fame pitcher Warren Spahn. Years later, Spahn, the winningest left-hander in history, quipped: “I’ll never forgive myself. We might have gotten rid of Willie forever if I’d only struck him out.”

Mays wound up hitting 18 homers off Spahn and 660 overall before becoming the second ROY inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1979. 🍊

Best-selling author Scott Pitoniak resides in Penfield, N.Y. His latest book, “Forever Orange: The Story of Syracuse University,” was published in September.



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FIRST-YEAR FAME

SOME OF THE BEST ROOKIE SEASONS IN HISTORY
REMAIN FRESH IN FANS' MEMORIES.

BY PHIL ROGERS

Don't blink. If you do, you may miss another epic season by an MLB rookie.

Performances that used to come around only once in a while — as good as “once-in-a-generation” sounds as an adjective, it’s almost never been true — are now happening on a regular, if not quite recurring, basis. Still, as often as they happen, there is nothing routine about them.

Just ask the folks in the judge’s robes in the bleachers at Yankee Stadium, cheering Aaron Judge. Or the Dodgers supporters in Chavez Ravine wearing jerseys to honor Cody Bellinger. Or the Mets fans who witnessed Pete Alonso turn the 2019 season into one long Home Run Derby, with almost as many that counted as the 57 he hit during the All-Star Game prelude in Cleveland.

Mike Trout was the guy who showed this new generation of players how rookies could take center stage. His first full season in 2012 was one of the greatest in history. But then again, so was Albert Pujols’ in 2001 and Mark McGwire’s in 1987.

Nobody knew what these guys were capable of before they got on the field and did it, their own organizations included. Twenty-two teams passed on Trout — including the Angels — in the 2009 draft before he was selected No. 25 overall. The Cardinals waited until the 13th round to beat the rest of baseball to Pujols after his brief career at Maple Woods Community College, outside Kansas City.

Mark Buehrle had a clue before almost anybody else. He was pitching for Jefferson College when he first faced Pujols. He remembers him as “a shortstop with a big [build] who could really, really hit.”

Sometimes the only thing a player needs to become great is the chance to get on the field against the best competition. That was the case for Alonso this season.

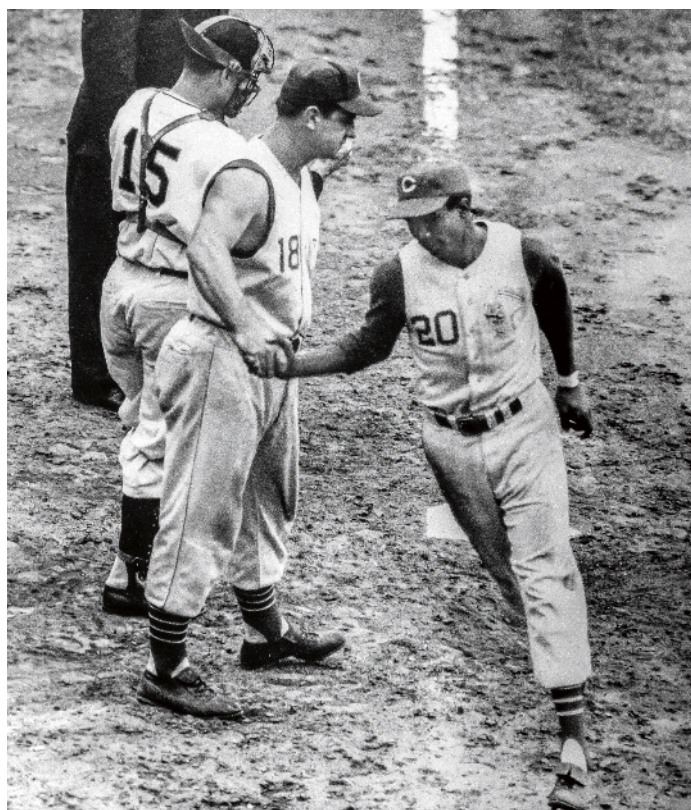
A second-round pick of the Mets in 2016, he probably didn’t need to play 255 games in the minor leagues but did anyway. That hardly stunted his development. It only delayed his arrival until this past March.

Alonso got rolling in early April, when he hit four homers in three games against the Nationals and Twins, and he barely slowed down the rest of the season. He hit nine homers in April, 10 in May and nine again in June. He had 30 at the All-Star break... and kept hitting them.

The 24-year-old first baseman hit his 40th homer on Aug. 18, breaking Bellinger’s NL record for homers by a rookie, and set a Mets franchise record with his 42nd on Aug. 27, topping the mark shared by Todd Hundley and Carlos Beltrán.

“It’s crazy,” Alonso said. “I just gotta go back to the days of Spring Training when I didn’t know if I was gonna make the team out of camp or not. I’m just extremely thankful for this opportunity, and this has been such an incredible year. I just want to keep building and help this team win.”

While rookies have been honored only since 1940 (when the Chicago chapter of the Baseball Writers’ Association of America began to annually



Frank Robinson tied a rookie record with 38 home runs in 1956. The Cincinnati slugger scored a National League-best 122 runs that year as well.

HARRY HARRIS/AP IMAGES



Ichiro Suzuki debuted in the big leagues with the Mariners in 2001 and quickly became a sensation, winning American League Rookie of the Year and Most Valuable Player honors.

name one top major league rookie), they've played major roles throughout the history of organized baseball.

Christy Mathewson was only 20 years old when he won 20 games – en route to 373 career wins – for John McGraw's New York Giants in 1901. Shoeless Joe Jackson hit .408 for Cleveland as a rookie in 1911, giving Ty Cobb a scare in the middle of his run of nine consecutive American League batting titles.

Similar to the first time Mathewson and Jackson took starring turns in the baseball drama, Alonso's performance reminds us why it's fine for imaginations to run wild every spring. The rich legacy of great rookie seasons includes:

Joe DiMaggio – Fresh off hitting .398 for the San Francisco Seals in the Pacific Coast League, Joltin' Joe hit the ground running in the Bronx. Playing all three outfield positions in a lineup led by Lou Gehrig, he batted .323 while leading the AL with 15 triples. He helped the 1936 Yankees win 102 games, 13 more than the season before. DiMaggio was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1955.

Ted Williams – Part of a Red Sox lineup that included Hall of Famers Jimmie Foxx, Joe Cronin (a player-manager) and Bobby Doerr, Williams was the definition of a prodigy as a 20-year-old. He hit .327 with 31 homers and an AL-high 145 RBI for Boston in 1939. Williams, who was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1966, wasted no time showing his legendary eye at the plate, with 43 more walks than strikeouts (107/64).

Don Newcombe – Arriving two years after Jackie Robinson, the 23-year-old Newcombe embodied the talent that was available in the Negro Leagues. He went 17-8 with five shutouts and 19 complete games for the 1949 Brooklyn Dodgers. He also started Game 1 of the World Series, becoming the first African-American pitcher to start in the Series.

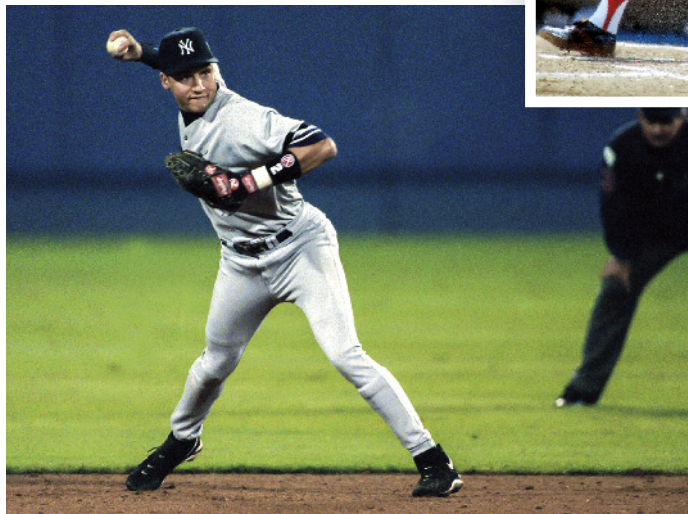
Frank Robinson – A basketball teammate of Bill Russell's in high school in the Bay Area, the ultra-athletic Robinson tied Wally Berger's rookie home run record (38) as a 20-year-old with the 1956 Cincinnati Reds. He stood tall at the plate despite being hit 20 times. He was hardly one-dimensional, batting .290 and scoring an NL-high 122 runs as a rookie. Pretty impressive for a player who received \$3,500 to sign his first contract.

Tony Oliva and Dick Allen – The 1964 season saw elite rookie performers in both leagues. Oliva signed with the Twins out of Cuba and earned his way up the ladder in the minors. He immediately showed his talent by leading the AL with a .323 average and 43 doubles (along with 31 homers) for the Twins. Phillies scout John Ogden recommended Allen by saying he was the only guy he'd seen who hit the ball as hard as Babe Ruth, and he showed it out of the gate. Allen batted .318 with 29 homers for Gene Mauch's Phillies, who became one of the most famous teams to not win a pennant.

Fred Lynn – Few rookies have ever taken their team for a ride like Lynn did with the Red Sox in 1975. He had helped USC win the College World Series three years in a row, and joined fellow rookie Jim Rice to help Boston win a pennant in their first try. He played Gold Glove defense in center field while hitting .331 with an AL-high 47 doubles, finishing with a .401 on-base percentage and a .566 slugging percentage. Lynn was the first player to be voted by baseball writers as MVP and Rookie of the Year in the same season.

Mark Fidrych – With his quirky mannerisms on the mound and wacky comments, "The Bird" was unlike any major leaguer before or since. He was often untouchable in his rookie season, going 19-9 with a 2.34 ERA in 250.1 innings as a 21-year-old with the 1976 Tigers. He tore the cartilage in his knee the next spring and could never recapture the magic he had as a rookie, winning only 10 more games before a torn rotator cuff forced him to retire.

Fernando Valenzuela – Just five years after Fidrych captured the attention of the country, Valenzuela upped the ante. Discovered in Mexico by scout Mike Brito, the lovable left-hander used a screwball and the deception of an unorthodox windup to throw five shutouts in his first eight starts (winning all eight games) for the 1981 Dodgers. He wound up 13-7 with a National League-leading 180 strikeouts in that strike-shortened season. He was only 20 years old when he beat the Yankees in a World Series start.



Above: Derek Jeter appeared in 157 games at shortstop for the 1996 Yankees, batting .314 while helping the franchise to its first World Series title in 18 seasons. **Inset:** Fred Lynn's rookie season of 1975 powered the Red Sox to the AL pennant. Lynn became the first player to win the Rookie of the Year Award and the MVP Award in the same season.



RONALD C. MCCRACKEN/GETTY IMAGES

CROSSING PATHS WITH TEDDY BALLGAME

Ted Williams and that fearsome Red Sox lineup were part of another rookie story in 1939 – in addition to Williams' tremendous debut campaign.

On Aug. 18, Senators rookie Mike Palagyi made his big league debut in the ninth inning of a game that Boston was winning, 3-2. Palagyi faced the heart of the Red Sox lineup and walked Doc Cramer before hitting Jimmie Foxx and then walking Williams and Joe Cronin. He was relieved at that point, and relief pitcher Walt Masterson surrendered a two-run single to Joe Vosmik to close the book on Palagyi, who would never again pitch in the big leagues.

He is one of 13 pitchers in history with a career earned-run average of infinity – and likely holds the MLB career record for highest percentage of future Hall of Famers faced: 75 percent of all big league batters Palagyi pitched to were eventually enshrined in Cooperstown.

He is one of 13 pitchers in history with a career earned-run average of infinity – and likely holds the MLB career record for highest percentage of future Hall of Famers faced: 75 percent of all big league batters Palagyi pitched to were eventually enshrined in Cooperstown.



GETTY IMAGES

Dwight Gooden – Doc hadn't turned 20 when he arrived at Shea Stadium in 1984. Unlike Valenzuela, there was nothing deceptive about Gooden. He blew hitters away with his fastball, going 17-9 and striking out a rookie record 276 in 218 innings.

Mark McGwire – Hitting 49 homers for the 1987 Oakland A's, McGwire broke the rookie home run record that had stood since Wally Berger hit 38 in 1930 (and was tied by Robinson in '56).

Hideo Nomo – Using a loophole to extract himself from his contract with Japan's Osaka Kintetsu Buffaloes, Nomo blazed a trail across the Pacific Ocean for Asian players. He used a so-called tornado delivery to baffle NL hitters upon his arrival in Los Angeles in 1995, going 13-6 and leading the league with 236 strikeouts in 191.1 innings. He edged Chipper Jones in Rookie of the Year balloting.

Derek Jeter – Polished as a 20-year-old, Jeter did everything well when he stepped into the shortstop's job for the Yankees in 1996. His numbers were outstanding – highlighted by a .314 batting average – and he helped usher in the Yankees' return to dominance.

Derek Jeter – Polished as a 20-year-old, Jeter did everything well when he stepped into the shortstop's job for the Yankees in 1996. His numbers were outstanding – highlighted by a .314 batting average – and he helped usher in the Yankees' return to dominance.

Ichiro Suzuki – Arriving in Seattle in 2001 as a 27-year-old veteran of nine Nippon Professional Baseball seasons (where he accumulated 1,278 hits), Suzuki led the AL with a .350 batting average, 56 stolen bases and 242 hits. He became just the second player to be named Rookie of the Year and Most Valuable Player in the same season. 🍌

Phil Rogers is a freelance writer living in Chicago who has covered baseball since 1984.



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GETTING BETTER

MANY HALL OF FAMERS OVERCAME EARLY STRUGGLES TO EARN A PLAQUE IN COOPERSTOWN.

BY JERRY CRASNICK

Some players are gifted enough to distinguish themselves the moment they step on a big league field. Future Hall of Famer Jackie Robinson won Major League Baseball's first Rookie of the Year Award in 1947, and Willie Mays, Frank Robinson, Willie McCovey, Billy Williams, Tom Seaver, Rod Carew and Johnny Bench were among the budding baseball icons to follow suit by the time divisional play began in 1969.

But the transition from prospect to transcendent isn't always seamless. Maybe there's a learning curve to hitting a big league curveball or developing consistent pitching mechanics. Sometimes the process is as simple as being patient, taking notes and absorbing the lessons dispensed by veteran teammates who've been around awhile.

Many future Hall of Famers overcame challenging starts by putting in the time, navigating extended periods of failure and/or self-doubt and proving to themselves and the world that they belonged. For each of them, the ultimate reward came with a plaque and a speech in Cooperstown.

Mickey Mantle

Mantle didn't have the luxury of breaking in gradually. He was 19 years old when the Yankees handed him a big league job and uniform No. 6 in the spring of 1951. The expectations were otherworldly, given that



Left: Mickey Mantle initially struggled to live up to expectations with the 1951 Yankees and was sent to the minor leagues, where a heart-to-heart talk with his father inspired him upon his return to the Bronx. **Right:** Greg Maddux's 1987 campaign with the Cubs, which saw him go 6-14 with a 5.61 ERA, gave little indication of his future dominance.

Babe Ruth had worn No. 3, Lou Gehrig No. 4 and Joe DiMaggio No. 5.

Mantle wasn't quite ready for the rigors of the big stage. After he slumped in July, manager Casey Stengel sent him to Triple-A Kansas City with an assurance that he would return to New York once he got his swing in order. It wasn't that easy. When Mantle's travails continued in the minors, he grew sufficiently discouraged to call his father and tell him he was ready to quit and come home. Mutt Mantle, a once-promising ballplayer himself who had spent much of his life working in the lead and zinc mines of Oklahoma, drove straight to Kansas City to dispense some tough love to his boy.

"I thought I raised a man," Mutt said. "You're nothing but a coward!"

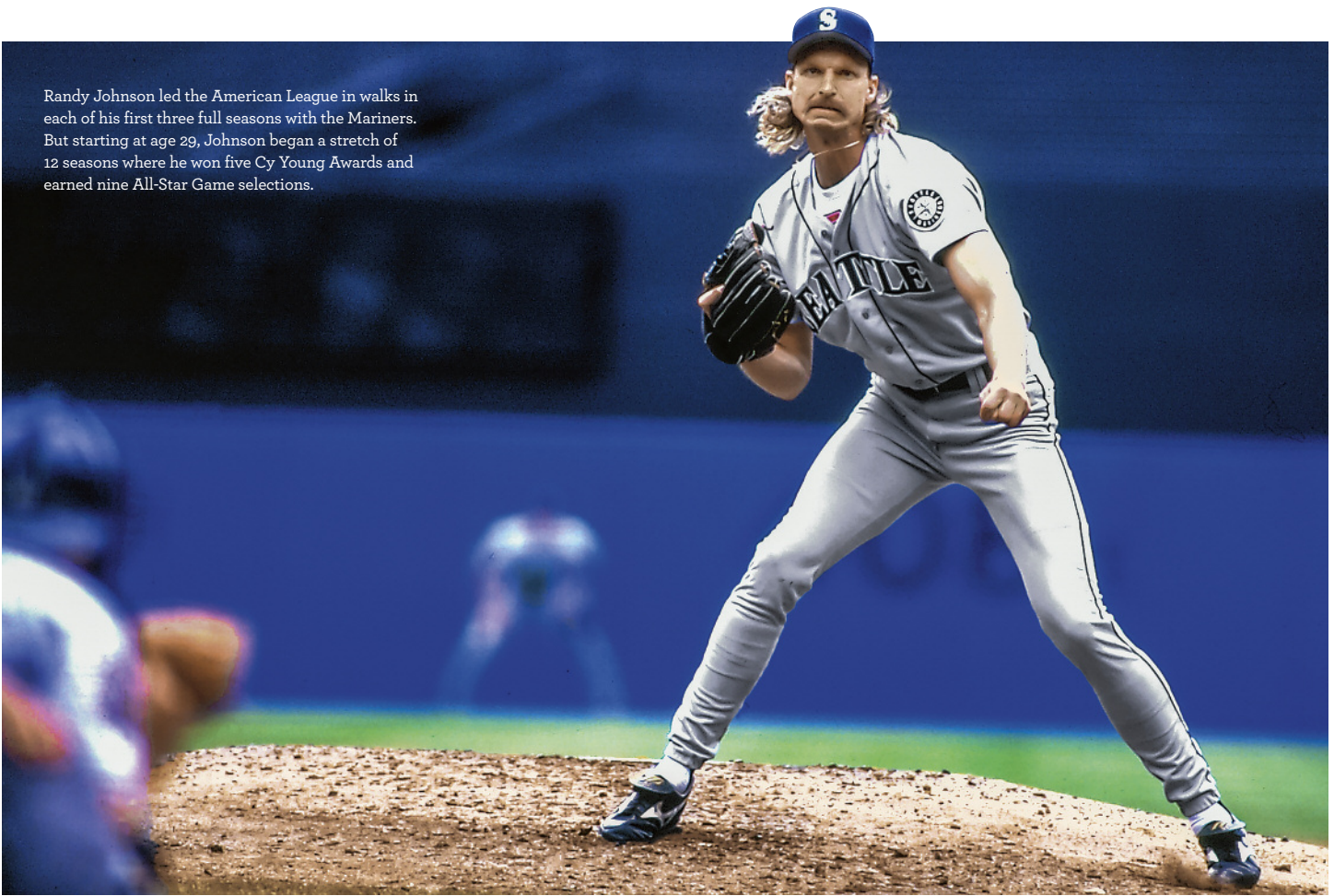
Young Mickey, properly inspired, went on a tear to earn a return trip to the majors. He finished with a respectable .267 batting average and 13 homers in 96 games as a rookie, and made the leap to full-fledged stardom the following year wearing No. 7.

Randy Johnson

Before Johnson began terrorizing hitters as



Randy Johnson led the American League in walks in each of his first three full seasons with the Mariners. But starting at age 29, Johnson began a stretch of 12 seasons where he won five Cy Young Awards and earned nine All-Star Game selections.



the “Big Unit,” he was a gangly lefty with a scattershot delivery. The Expos selected him out of USC in the second round of the 1985 draft, and his growing pains were reflected in 128 walks over 140 innings with Double-A Jacksonville in 1987. Two years later, as a rookie in Montreal and Seattle, Johnson posted a 7-13 record with a 4.82 ERA.

The Expos traded him to Seattle in a package deal for Mark Langston in 1989, and Johnson led the American League in walks for three straight seasons before breaking through as a staff ace at age 29. His 6-foot-10 inch frame and upper 90s fastball made him an ominous presence. But the parts were only sporadically in sync.

“I don’t think people quite understand how difficult it is to be 6-foot-10 and throwing a ball 60 feet, 6 inches,” Johnson said years later. “In order to do that, you have to be consistent with your release point, your arm slot and where you’re landing. For someone who is 6-1, 6-2, he has less body to keep under control, so it’s a lot easier. For me, it was difficult because I was so tall.”

Johnson gradually figured it out and evolved from a thrower into a pitcher. His 303

wins, five Cy Young Awards and two no-hitters are testament that he was worth the wait.

Brooks Robinson

Athleticism was always a strong suit for Robinson. He played baseball, basketball and football in high school in Arkansas, and he was a rarity as a right-handed athlete who wrote, ate and performed other daily tasks with his left hand. His natural coordination outweighed his lack of speed and average arm.

From the moment the Orioles signed him for a modest \$4,000 bonus, Robinson had a lot to prove. He began his professional career at second base, and he received a large dose of humility when the public address announcer referred to him as “Bob Robinson” in his first professional stop with the York White Roses in Pennsylvania.

After three nondescript cameos with the Orioles, Robinson logged a .238/.292/.305 slash line as Baltimore’s everyday third baseman in 1958. But manager Paul Richards stuck with him, and Robinson’s glove carried him until he figured it out at the plate. He made his first All-Star team and captured the first of

his 16 Gold Glove Awards in 1960. The “Human Vacuum Cleaner” was on his way.

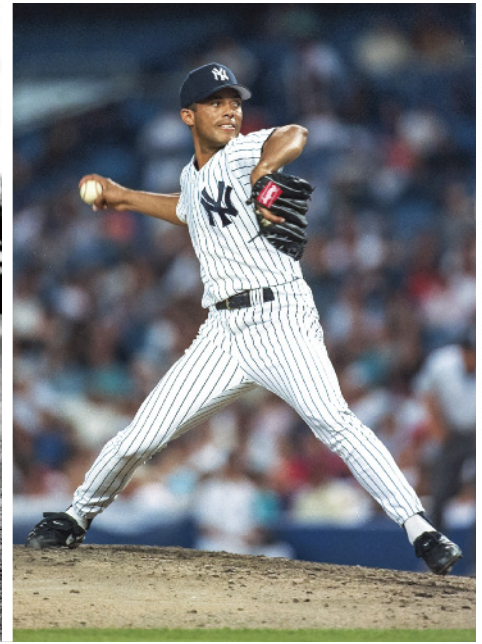
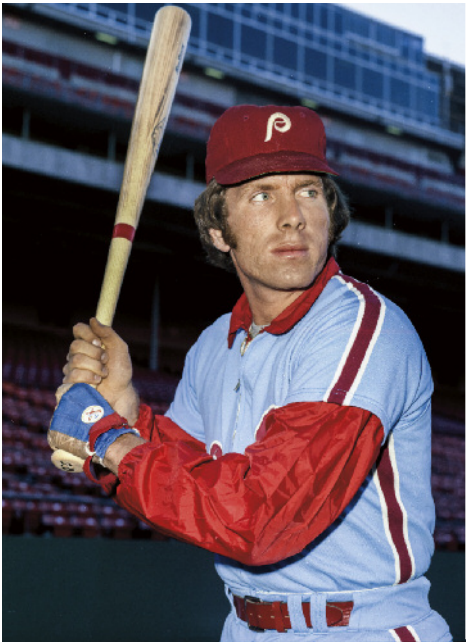
Greg Maddux

Maddux and his friends Tom Glavine and John Smoltz all encountered some tough times out of the chute. Smoltz went 2-7 with a 5.48 ERA before bouncing back to make the All-Star team in his second season. Glavine logged a 7-17 record and a 4.56 ERA for a 106-loss Braves team in 1988 in his second year.

Maddux was similarly challenged as a rookie in Chicago, going 6-14 with a 5.61 ERA and posting a 101-74 strikeout-to-walk ratio in 1987. He was so slight and unassuming, reliever Lee Smith called him “The Batboy.”

But Maddux was perceptive and patient enough to sit back, learn from the veterans and constantly tweak his repertoire. Cubs pitching coach Dick Pole called his pitches from the dugout starting in 1988 and taught him the value of inducing early contact. During that time, teammates Rick Sutcliffe, Scott Sanderson, Ed Lynch and Smith showed him the value of professionalism and attention to detail.

Maddux won 18 games and made the first



Left to right: Mike Schmidt hit just .196 in his first full season as a big leaguer in 1973. But by the next season, he won his first of three straight National League home run titles. Sandy Koufax battled control issues for years after signing as a “bonus baby” with the Dodgers. But upon finding his stride in 1961, he became one of the dominant pitchers of his era. Mariano Rivera bounced between the starting rotation and the bullpen as a Yankees rookie in 1995, yet soon settled into the closer’s role, where he would record an MLB-record 652 saves.

of eight All-Star teams at age 22, and he emerged as one of the preeminent righties in baseball history over 11 dominant seasons in Atlanta. With 355 victories, four Cy Young Awards and 18 career Gold Glove Awards, Maddux cruised into the Hall with Glavine in 2014. Smoltz joined them in Cooperstown the following year.

Mike Schmidt

Sometimes a garden-variety vote of confidence can go a long way.

Schmidt hit 18 homers as a rookie with the Phillies in 1973, but he also batted .196 and struck out in 37 percent of his at-bats. The booing from Philadelphia fans increased as the season progressed, and some members of the team’s front office thought Schmidt might benefit from a mental break and a refresher course with the team’s Triple-A affiliate in Eugene, Ore.

Amid the debate, manager Danny Ozark held firm, lobbying for Schmidt to stay with the big club and work through the inevitable setbacks. Schmidt gained confidence with a successful winter ball stint in Puerto Rico, and he showed up at Spring Training the next year a different player. He led the league with 36 homers and a .546 slugging percentage and finished sixth in National League MVP balloting. The foundation for a Hall of Fame career was in place.

“My point was that Mike had proven he could hit Triple-A pitching. What was he going to prove down there?” Ozark said in a 1994

interview. “I said we might as well let him play. He had so much talent, it was only a matter of time before he put it all together.”

Sandy Koufax

Koufax’s blazing fastball and overpowering curve earned him a \$14,000 signing bonus from the Dodgers in 1954. But Brooklyn’s resident “bonus baby” was consistently inconsistent with his control, and manager Walter Alston lacked the faith in him to expose him to high-leverage situations or let him work out of jams with the big club. After several years of frustration, Koufax confronted Dodgers general manager Buzzie Bavasi early in the 1960 season with a request to be traded. The Dodgers were fortunate enough not to oblige.

Koufax’s breakthrough, by all accounts, came during Spring Training in 1961, when veteran catcher Norm Sherry suggested that he dial back slightly on his heater for better command and rely more on his curveball and changeup to keep hitters off balance. In his autobiography, Koufax recalled Sherry advising him to “take the grunt out of the fastball.”

The turnaround was astonishing. During a five-year run from 1962 through 1966, Koufax went 111-34 with a 1.95 ERA, three strikeout titles and three Cy Young Awards. He reached the Hall of Fame in his first appearance on the ballot despite retiring at age 30 because of an arthritic left elbow. No less an authority

than Stan Musial called Koufax “the most overpowering pitcher I ever faced.”

Mariano Rivera

Before Rivera induced a sense of dread in opposing hitters to the accompaniment of his entrance song, Metallica’s “Enter Sandman,” he was a swingman in search of a role. Rivera went 5-3 with a 5.51 ERA over 19 appearances with the Yankees as a rookie in 1995.

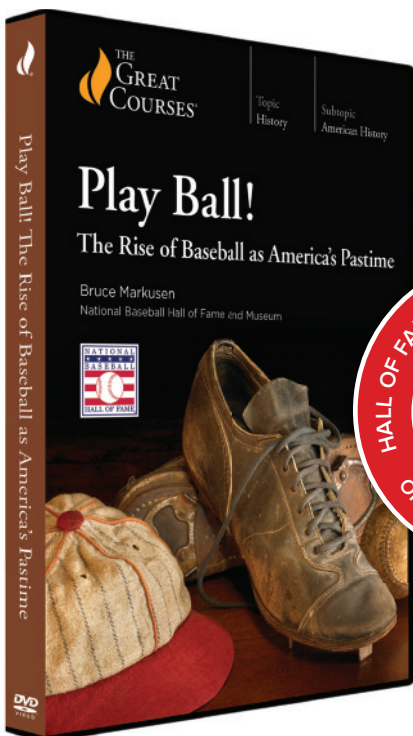
John Wetteland was entrenched as New York’s closer, and the Yankees toyed with the idea of trading Rivera to Seattle for shortstop Félix Fermín the following spring out of concern that Derek Jeter might not be ready to handle the position full-time in the Bronx.

File this one under “sometimes the best trades are the ones you don’t make.”

Rivera emerged as a dominant setup man in 1996, and the following year he rode his signature cutter to 43 saves, a 1.88 ERA and his first career All-Star appearance. He went on to record a record 652 saves (with 42 more in the Postseason) and set a standard as the first player to reach Cooperstown by unanimous vote.

As Yankees manager Joe Girardi observed in 2009: “I don’t know if we’ll ever see another Mariano Rivera. I really don’t believe we will.” 🍎

Jerry Crasnick covered baseball for three decades for ESPN and several other media outlets. He now works for the Major League Baseball Players Association.



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Sale of the Century

100 years later, the Yankees' purchase of Babe Ruth's contract is still being felt throughout the baseball world.

BY BILL FRANCIS

For fans of the Boston Red Sox, the unthinkable, unimaginable, unfathomable happened 100 years ago with the sale of Babe Ruth to the New York Yankees.

Ruth, all of 24 years old, had made the transition from star southpaw pitcher to the premier slugger in the game by 1919. Now patrolling left field for Boston, and thanks to his powerful left-handed stroke, he clubbed 29 home runs that set a new single-season big league record. But then the news broke. Ruth would soon be playing 77 games each season at the Polo Grounds – his new home ballpark until Yankee Stadium opened in 1923 – with its short right-field fence.

It was announced on Jan. 5, 1920 – though the transaction had been consummated a week earlier – that Ruth was now a member of a rival American League franchise.

Newspapers across the country shared the news with provocative headlines: “Red Sox Sell Ruth for \$100,000 Cash” read *The Boston Globe*; “Ruth Bought by New York Americans for \$125,000, Highest Price in Baseball Annals” blared *The New York Times*; “New York Yankees Buy Babe Ruth from Boston Red Sox” stated the *Chicago Tribune*.

“Like all things Ruthian, everything about Ruth’s sale from the Red Sox to the Yankees was outsized,” said Tom Shieber, the lead curator on the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum’s *Babe Ruth: His Life and Legend* exhibit that opened in 2014.

“The price tag was unparalleled in sports



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

Babe Ruth was a standout pitcher for the Red Sox before taking the baseball world by storm in 1919 when he hit 29 home runs. Prior to the 1920 season, a contract dispute led to Ruth’s sale to the Yankees.

history, the story was obsessively covered in the press and every last detail was voraciously consumed by baseball fans nationwide. With the possible exception of the Louisiana Purchase, what other acquisition has reached the same level of long-term recognition in the American public’s conscience?”

So how did it come to this, that Ruth, a legend in his own time, was shipped out of Boston just as his offensive prowess was emerging? Coming off a 1919 season in which he led the Junior Circuit not only in homers but also with his 113 RBI and 103 runs scored, the Colossus of Clout wanted a new contract that would pay him \$20,000 per season. Prior

to the 1919 season, Ruth had signed a three-year deal with the Red Sox that would pay him \$10,000 annually.

“You can say for me,” said Ruth to *The Boston Globe* on Oct. 24, 1919, while awaiting a train in Boston heading to Los Angeles, “that I will not play with the Red Sox unless I get \$20,000. You may think that sounds like a pipedream, but it is the truth. I feel that I made a bad move last year when I signed a three-year contract to play for \$30,000. The Boston club realized much on my value and I think that I am entitled to twice as much as my contract calls for.”

By December 1919, the war of words had escalated, and Red Sox president and owner Harry Frazee hinted he might sell Ruth, stating: “I’m willing to trade any man on my team, excepting only Harry Hooper.” Those Boston baseball fans whose ears were close to the ground were thus prepared to eventually hear Ruth had been sold to another club.

“The price was something enormous, but I do not care to name the figures. It was an amount the club could not afford to refuse,” said Frazee, when making the announcement of Ruth’s sale to the press at Red Sox headquarters. “I should have preferred to have taken players in exchange for Ruth, but no club could have given me the equivalent in men without wrecking itself, and so the deal had to be made on a cash basis. No other club could afford to give the amount the Yankees have paid for him, and I do not mind saying I think they are taking a gamble. With the money, the Boston club can now go into the market and buy other players and have a stronger and better team in all respects than we would have had if Ruth had remained with us.

“I do not wish to detract one iota from Ruth’s ability as a ballplayer nor from his value as an attraction, but there is no getting away from the fact that despite his 29 home runs, the Red Sox finished sixth in the race last season,” Frazee added. “What the Boston fans want, I take it, and what I want because they want it, is a winning team, rather than a one-man team which finishes in sixth place.”

The 1919 Red Sox, with Ruth leading the way, finished the campaign with a 66-71 record, above just Washington and Philadelphia in the eight-team AL. The Yankees, without Ruth, finished in third with an 80-59 mark. By 1920, the Yankees were on their way to long-term

success at 95-59, while Boston, at 72-81, continued a lengthy championship drought that wouldn't end until winning a World Series title in 2004.

"I am not at liberty to tell the price we paid," smiled Yankees co-owner Jacob Ruppert, after he had made the announcement of the Ruth acquisition. "I can say positively, however, that it is by far the biggest price ever paid for a ballplayer. Ruth was considered a champion of all champions, and, as such, deserving of an opportunity to shine before the sport lovers of the greatest metropolis of the world."

Then, in a bit of foreshadowing, Ruppert added, "It is not only our intention, but a strong life purpose, moreover, to give the loyal American League fans of greater New York an opportunity to root for our team in a world's series. We are going to give them a pennant winner, no matter what the cost. I think the addition of Ruth to our forces should hold greatly along those general lines. Yet the fans can rest assured we by no means intend to stop there. Eventually we are going to have the best team that has ever been seen anywhere."

Ruth, contacted in Los Angeles – where Yankees manager Miller Huggins helped secure a contract that would pay the home run king \$20,000 per season in 1920 and '21 – claimed not to be surprised by his sale to New York, noting: "When I made my demand on the Red Sox for \$20,000 a year, I had an idea they would choose to sell me rather than pay the increase, and I knew the Yankees were the most probable purchasers in that event."

Yankees pitcher Bob Shawkey, who was at the team's offices when Ruppert announced the sale, said jubilantly: "Gee, I'm glad that guy's not going to hit against me anymore. You take your life in your hands every time you step up against him. You just throw up anything that happens to come into your head, with a prayer, and duck for your life with the pitch."

While the official sale price of Ruth was not made public at the time of the transaction, numbers were speculated about. According to modern research compiled by Michael Hauptert, professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, the actual purchase price was \$100,000, payable in four annual installments of \$25,000 at six percent interest, with New York making the first payment on Dec. 19, 1919.



This promissory note from Dec. 26, 1919, documents Babe Ruth's sale to the Yankees from the Red Sox. The back of the note features tax stamps of the time – part of revenue-generating systems by the United States government to pay for debt accrued from World War I. The promissory note is preserved in the Hall of Fame's Library collection.



"When news of the sale first broke, there were reports that the deal was more complicated than the simple cash transaction announced by Colonel Ruppert," wrote Hauptert in the book "The Babe." "Rumors began to crop up about a second part to the deal: a loan from the Yankees to Frazee in an amount ranging between \$300,000 and \$400,000. In this case, the rumors proved to be true. On May 25, 1920, Ruppert made a personal loan to Frazee for \$300,000, with Fenway Park as collateral. Because Frazee owned the Red Sox and

Ruppert owned half of the Yankees, and the collateral for the loan was Fenway Park, it was very much a part of the Ruth transaction."

Part of the permanent collection at the Hall of Fame is a Ruth promissory note, dated Dec. 26, 1919, and donated in 1999. The note, signed by Ruppert and Frazee, is for the sum of \$25,000.

"The 1919 promissory note for the sale of Babe Ruth from Boston to New York is a critical piece of baseball history," said Hall of Fame Librarian James Gates. "The results of this transaction had immediate impact on the caliber of both teams for many years to come, and long-term implications on the growth of popularity of baseball as America's National Pastime.

"This event is a pivotal moment in baseball history and in American history. We are pleased to have this document as part of our archival collection. Given that we did not acquire this item until 80 years after the original event, it also shows the importance of patience and persistence in our efforts to further develop our collections." 📌

Bill Francis is the senior research and writing specialist at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.



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HALL OF FAME CHAMPION HOOD

Vintage inspired hood features brushed French terry cotton blend for a soft, broken-in look and feel. Contrasting hood lining and fabric sleeve stripes. Hall of Fame wordmark appliqué and embroidery across chest.

Sizes: S-3XL | 231964 | \$59.95 | Members \$53.96



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Soft garment dyed tee made from ring spun cotton features distressed screen print graphics on the front and back.

Sizes: S-3XL | 201830 | \$22.00 | Members \$19.80



HALL OF FAME '47 BRAND QUARTER ZIP

Retro inspired quarter zip made with brushed French Terry cotton for a soft, smooth texture and added comfort. Hall of Fame wordmark applied across the chest in two layer appliqué and embroidery, with Hall of Fame diamond patch on the sleeve.

Sizes: S-2XL | 200079 | \$71.95 | Members \$64.76



HALL OF FAME '47 BRAND CLEAN UP CAP

Features washed cotton and relaxed unstructured crown for a casual look. Embroidered Hall of Fame logo and cotton strap closure.

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The Hall of Fame version of the official on-field cap of MLB. Features polyester performance fabric, high-profile crown and moisture wicking sweatband. Embroidered Hall of Fame logo with Cooperstown, NY on the back.

Sizes: 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ -8 | HOF5950 | \$34.95 | Members \$31.46



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Reprints of panoramic images from the Hall of Fame archives featuring classic ballparks and historic teams from the early decades of the 20th century. Each photo is double matted, framed and comes ready to hang.

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Faithful reproductions of photos from the Hall of Fame archives featuring historic moments, players and teams. Available matted, or matted and framed.

Matted & Framed

100058 | \$49.95 | Members \$44.96

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Replica World Series ticket photomint double matted and framed with team logo and World Series Champion coins. Includes a certificate of authenticity.
WSTIX | \$49.99-\$499.99 | Members \$44.99-\$449.99

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 310500 | \$49.95 | Members \$44.96



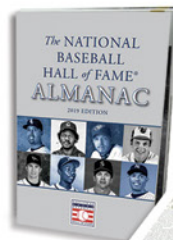
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Photographer Jean Fruth captures baseball at its "grassroots" with more than 250 images from all levels of amateur baseball. Each chapter opens with a portrait of a baseball legend and first-person essay of their memories of the game. Each signed by Jean Fruth and one of the baseball legends featured in the book.
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Relive the 2019 Induction Ceremony in its entirety, plus bonus footage of the Hall of Fame Awards Ceremony and Legends of the Game Roundtable program. Approximate run time 5 hours and 8 minutes.
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 117170 | \$10.00 | Members \$9.00

HALL OF FAMER DECANTERS

Unique baseball shaped decanters from the Cooperstown Distillery feature replica signatures of your favorite Hall of Famers, home plate base, pewter-like Hall of Fame emblem and an Ash wood stopper. Measures approximately 7.5" x 4.5" and holds 750ml of liquid.

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Our keepsake cloisonné ornament from Kitty Keller is a handcrafted work of art. Each ornament is individually formed by hand using 24k gold plated wires that separate the elements of the enamel design. Measures 3" in diameter.

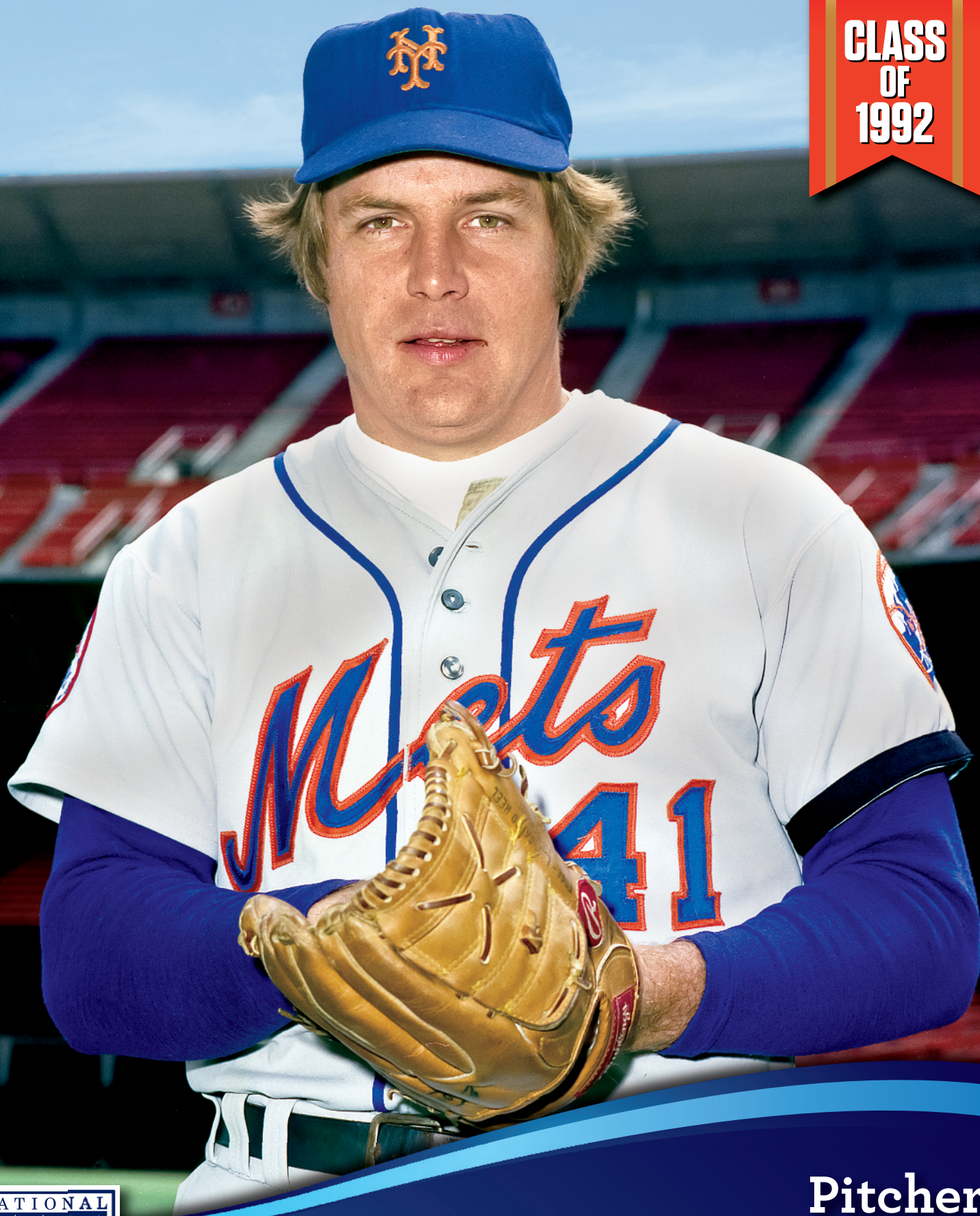
505880 | \$49.95 | Members \$44.96

2019 HALL OF FAME HOLIDAY ORNAMENT

Our annual holiday ornament is designed exclusively for the Hall of Fame and features a three dimensional snow globe design. Crafted from solid brass with rhodium plating. Measures approximately 2 1/2" x 3 1/8".

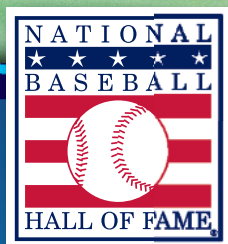
520086 | \$18.95 | Members \$17.06

**CLASS
OF
1992**



Pitcher

TOM SEAVER



GEORGE THOMAS SEAVER

Elected: 1992 • Born: Nov. 17, 1944, Fresno, Calif.
 Batted: Right Threw: Right • Height: 6'1" Weight: 195 pounds
 Played for: New York Mets (1967-77, 1983); Cincinnati Reds (1977-82);
 Chicago White Sox (1984-86); Boston Red Sox (1986)



Year	Team	W	L	PCT	ERA	G	GS	CG	SHO	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
1967	NYM	16	13	.552	2.76	35	34	18	2	0	251.0	224	85	77	78	170
1968	NYM	16	12	.571	2.20	36	35	14	5	1	278.0	224	73	68	48	205
1969	NYM	25	7	.781	2.21	36	35	18	5	0	273.1	202	75	67	82	208
1970	NYM	18	12	.600	2.82	37	36	19	2	0	290.2	230	103	91	83	283
1971	NYM	20	10	.667	1.76	36	35	21	4	0	286.1	210	61	56	61	289
1972	NYM	21	12	.636	2.92	35	35	13	3	0	262.0	215	92	85	77	249
1973	NYM	19	10	.655	2.08	36	36	18	3	0	290.0	219	74	67	64	251
1974	NYM	11	11	.500	3.20	32	32	12	5	0	236.0	199	89	84	75	201
1975	NYM	22	9	.710	2.38	36	36	15	5	0	280.1	217	81	74	88	243
1976	NYM	14	11	.560	2.59	35	34	13	5	0	271.0	211	83	78	77	235
1977	NYM/CIN	21	6	.778	2.58	33	33	19	7	0	261.1	199	78	75	66	196
1978	CIN	16	14	.533	2.88	36	36	8	1	0	259.2	218	97	83	89	226
1979	CIN	16	6	.727	3.14	32	32	9	5	0	215.0	167	85	75	61	131
1980	CIN	10	8	.556	3.64	26	26	5	1	0	168.0	140	74	68	59	101
1981	CIN	14	2	.875	2.54	23	23	6	1	0	166.1	120	51	47	66	87
1982	CIN	5	13	.278	5.50	21	21	0	0	0	111.1	136	75	68	44	62
1983	NYM	9	14	.391	3.55	34	34	5	2	0	231.0	201	104	91	86	135
1984	CWS	15	11	.577	3.95	34	33	10	4	0	236.2	216	108	104	61	131
1985	CWS	16	11	.593	3.17	35	33	6	1	0	238.2	223	103	84	69	134
1986	CWS/SDS	7	13	.350	4.03	28	28	2	0	0	176.1	180	83	79	56	103
20 Years		311	205	.603	2.86	656	647	231	61	1	4783.0	3971	1674	1521	1380	3640

All statistics are from baseball-reference.com • All bolded marks are league-leading totals • Bolded and italicized marks are major league-best totals
Awards & Records: 1967 National League Rookie of the Year and 1969 World Series champion • NL Cy Young Award winner in 1969, 1973 and 1975 • 12-time All-Star and three-time NL earned-run average leader (1970-71, 1973)

DID YOU KNOW ...

- ★ ...that on April 22, 1970, Tom Seaver struck out 10 straight San Diego batters to set a record that still stands?
- ★ ...that on June 16, 1978, Seaver pitched a no-hitter against the Cardinals?
- ★ ...that in 1981, Seaver became just the fifth pitcher in history to reach the 3,000 strikeout mark?

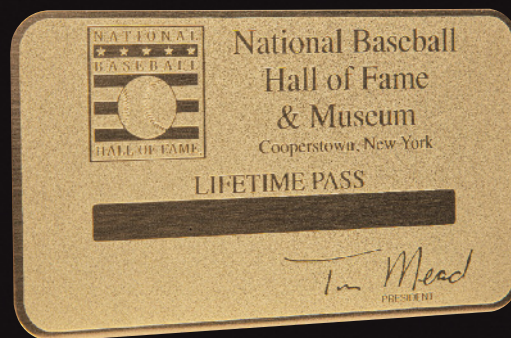
WHAT THEY SAY ...

- ★ "I didn't feel there was any way he could miss. I mean, here was a guy who was throwing gas, the mid-90s, on the corners."
 — FORMER METS CATCHER JERRY GROTE ON TOM SEAVER'S FIRST YEARS WITH THE TEAM
- ★ "Tom Seaver was the symbol of the Mets in the early years and the cornerstone of the championships in 1969 and 1973."
 — FORMER METS GENERAL MANAGER FRANK CASHEN



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'19 Pieces

The Museum will preserve historic artifacts from the 2019 season.

BY CRAIG MUDER

The players and teams made history. The artifacts told the tale. And the generous donations of dozens of pieces means the memorable 2019 season will be preserved forever in Cooperstown.

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum's additions to the collection this year included:

Teaming up

Pitcher Edwin Jackson debuted for the Toronto Blue Jays on May 14, wearing this cap (right) while on the mound. The Blue Jays became the 14th MLB team that Jackson has pitched for, a new record for any player.

Later in the 2019 season, Jackson pitched for the Tigers – a team he played for in 2009 when he was named to the All-Star Game.

One man gang

The Mets' Noah Syndergaard wore these spikes (right) on May 2 when he shut out the Reds and homered for the game's only run in his team's 1-0 victory.

It marked just the seventh time in big league history – and the first since 1983 – that a pitcher had thrown a shutout and accounted for the game's only run with a home run.

3,000 CCs

Yankees pitcher CC Sabathia wore this jersey (top right) on April 30 during the game in which he struck out his 3,000th career batter.

Sabathia, who retired after the 2019 season, became only the 17th pitcher in big league history to reach the 3,000-strikeout mark.



PHOTOS BY MILO STEWART FOR NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM



One cap, two cap

Mike Fiers of the Athletics wore this cap (top left) when he no-hit the Reds on May 7.

It was Fiers' second career no-hitter, following his gem for the Astros against the Dodgers on Aug. 21, 2015. Fiers' cap from that game is also part of the Hall of Fame collection.

Get a grip

The Rangers' Joey Gallo wore these batting gloves (top right) on May 8 when he hit his 100th career home run.

Gallo, who was named to his first All-Star Game in 2019, reached 100 home runs in his 377th big league game, the fastest in American League history. Only the Pirates' Ralph Kiner (376 games) and the Phillies' Ryan Howard (325) reached the century mark in fewer games.

European vacation

D.J. LeMahieu of the Yankees used this bat (below) on June 29 when he became the first player to record a hit in a regular-season game on European soil.

A 2019 All-Star, LeMahieu set a career high in home runs this year and helped lead the Yankees to the American League East title. 🇺🇸

Craig Muder is the director of communications for the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.



PHOTOS BY MILO STEWART JR./NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM



Premiere Prints

Rookie cards have the power to thrill collectors and players.

BY DAVID MORIAH

The exact date is lost in the sweep of history, but we do know it was around 1980. At a precise moment, someone – perhaps gazing at a small rectangle featuring the image of a baseball player – spoke the words “rookie card.”

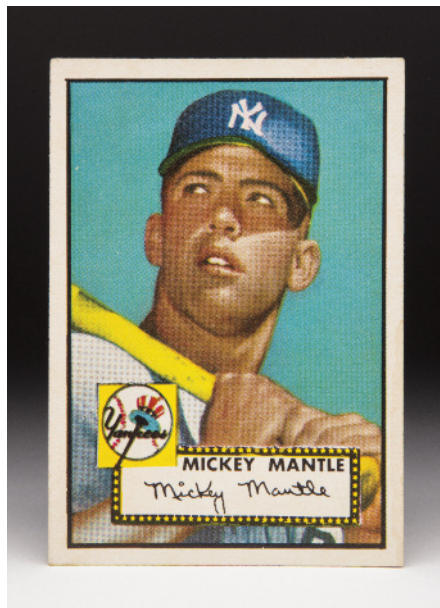
From that moment forward, life would never be the same for anyone who finds joy in the world of baseball cards.

Those who remember trekking to the corner store clutching coins with eager anticipation of “the pack” never uttered such a phrase. Why value the card of a new player vs. one of Ted Williams, Mickey Mantle or Willie Mays? Cards of rookies yet to accomplish anything were quickly passed over or traded away.

By 1980, the generation that had avidly pursued those treasures, the baby boomers, were becoming adults. Most had left behind the childhood hobby of collecting cards, but now they had disposable income, and many still loved baseball. Perhaps they experienced the mythological trauma of discovering mom had thrown out their cards. Whatever the trigger, a flood of boomers headed to card shows all over America willing to swap money for the cardboard memories of their youth.

Almost overnight, an industry was born. Dealers scoured yard sales and flea markets, hoping to turn penny buys into dollar sales. In those pre-internet days, publications sprang up to cover the explosion of interest, filled with ads from a burgeoning army of card dealers.

In a highly competitive market, it's critical to find ways to boost profits. Enter the hitherto unknown concept of a rookie card, loosely



Topps' 1952 Mickey Mantle card was technically not Mantle's first card, though it is recognized by many as his “rookie” card.

defined as the first card produced featuring a player's picture and statistics. We'll return to definition complications later.

By 1986, the monthly newsstand magazine *Baseball Cards* put out a special issue devoted to the rookie card frenzy. The lead article by publisher Bob Lemke explained how it came about.

“Essentially, the entire rookie card phenomenon began as nothing more than dealer hype,” Lemke wrote, “a way to sell more new baseball cards than ever before at unprecedented prices.”

Ads highlighted rookie status for older cards, often at double or triple the price of the player's subsequent cards. The concept caught on with collectors, who began hoarding first-year cards

of newer players as they were issued. Card manufacturers responded by cranking out even more cards to satisfy what seemed an insatiable appetite, especially for rookies who might someday be the next Mantle or Mays.

Overproduction in the 1980s led to the inevitable crash, and 1980s rookie cards never attained the value speculators anticipated. However, the idea of premium value for vintage rookie cards held fast, and to this day first cards of stars from Hank Aaron to Nolan Ryan to Mariano Rivera command a premium over their later cards.

We return to the question of how to define a rookie card. In some cases, especially from 1956 to 1980 when Topps had an ironclad monopoly on issuing cards, the task was simple. Bob Gibson, for example, showed up in 1959, Lou Brock in 1962, Reggie Jackson in 1969 and Ozzie Smith in 1979. No one disputes those as true rookie cards.

In 1980, Topps' monopoly was successfully challenged in court. Donruss and Fleer, companies itching to enter the lucrative card market, began producing baseball cards the following year. Competition quickly led to the release of late-season sets featuring players traded or arriving after the regular set was printed. Alternately call “Traded” or “Update” sets, these more limited editions often contained the first card of a new player.

In 1984 for example, Fleer Update boasted the first cards of Roger Clemens, Dwight Gooden and Kirby Puckett. Each were featured in regular sets of the three card companies in 1985, but confusion reigned, and still does, about whether to call the 1984 Update or regular-issue cards from 1985 their true rookie cards.

A more famous example of confusion involves one of the most valuable and highly sought cards of the modern era, roughly defined as beginning after World War II. The 1952 Topps Mickey Mantle is often referred to as his rookie card, but in 1951 a Mantle card appeared in a set produced by Topps rival Bowman Gum. The two companies went head-to-head until Topps triumphed and bought out Bowman in 1956.

Because Topps was the eventual winner, or perhaps because Mantle's 1952 Topps card was larger and more aesthetically pleasing than the Bowman version, many collectors casually refer to the 1952 Topps as the Mantle rookie card.

TOPPS BASEBALL CARD PHOTOGRAPHED BY MILD STEWART AT NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

Another source of confusion emanates from Topps' practice of using labels and symbols for rookie stars long before the current rookie card concept came into play. Sometimes the label fit, such as Carl Yastrzemski's first card in 1960, emblazoned with the words "Sport Magazine 1960 Rookie Star." However, the next year Yastrzemski's card includes a prominent star with the words "1961 Rookie" within it. Little did Topps know such inconsistencies would befuddle a future generation of collectors.

The strangest inconsistency is found in the curious cardboard saga of Lou Piniella. In 1964, Piniella appeared on a card titled Rookie Stars of the Washington Senators, in 1968 on Rookie Stars of the Cleveland Indians, and in 1969 on Rookie Stars of the Seattle Pilots, a team with whom he never actually played.

In addition to these confusions, sometimes uncertainty of what constitutes a rookie card results from companies issuing what might be termed "pre-rookie" cards. In the 1990s, several sets featured major league prospects prior to their reaching the big leagues. Would they qualify as rookie cards?

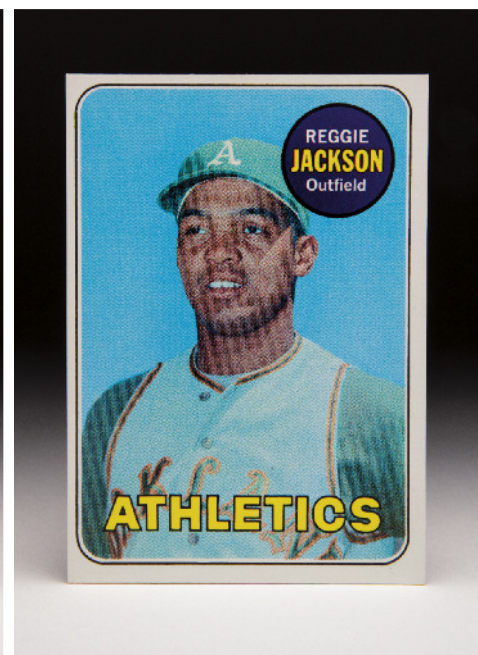
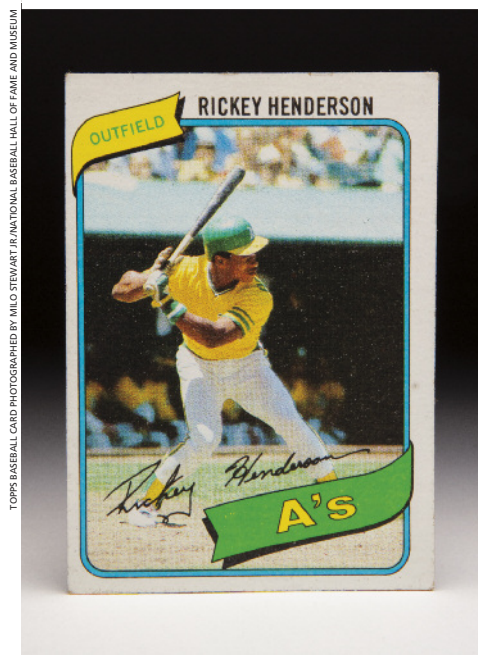
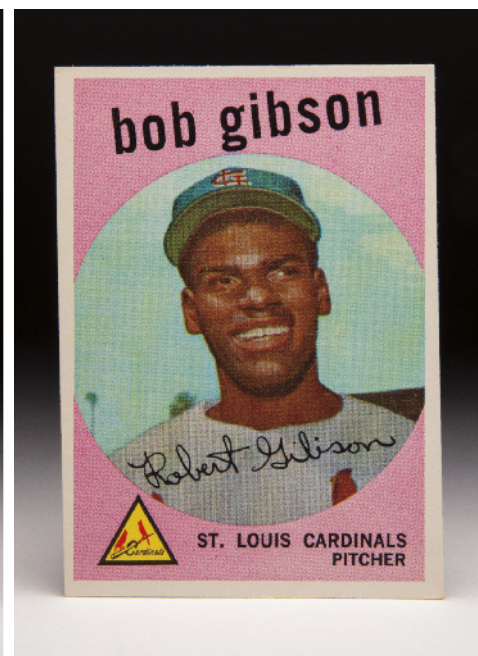
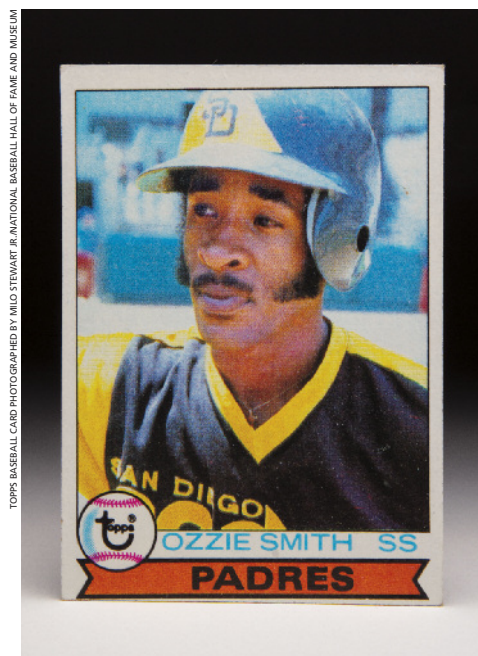
Topps included in their regular 1985 issue a subset of players from the 1984 USA Olympics team that included Mark McGwire. Are they rookie cards?

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum grappled with those questions when putting together its *Shoebbox Treasures* exhibit, which opened to rave reviews in May.

"We checked several sources, including the 'Standard Catalog of Vintage Baseball Cards' published by *Sports Collectors Digest*, and decided a rookie card had to be that of a player already in the major leagues when it was issued by a national card company," said John Odell, the Museum's curator of history and research and the lead curator on the exhibit.

Fast forward to today. Comparing card collecting in the 20th century to the 21st is like comparing the Wright Brothers' "Kitty Hawk" plane to the International Space Station. While collectors sorted amongst a handful of companies and a few subsets after Topps' monopoly ended in 1981, today's collectors face a dizzying array of choices.

An attempt was made to bring the proliferation of card manufacturers under control in 2009. Major League Baseball inked an agreement with Topps granting exclusive rights to use team logos in their



Clockwise from top left: Ozzie Smith's rookie card was printed by Topps in its 1979 set, just prior to the iconic card maker greatly expanding its yearly press run. Bob Gibson's Topps rookie card was printed for the 1959 season when he debuted with the St. Louis Cardinals. Though Reggie Jackson made his first major league appearance in 1967, it wasn't until 1969 that Topps printed his first card. Rickey Henderson's 1980 Topps card featured the future Hall of Famer in 1979 with the Athletics.

photos, but that did nothing to slow the proliferation of sets, subsets and variations of individual cards. Topps spokesperson Wendy Freedman uses Shohei Ohtani, who debuted in 2018, as an example.

"If you have an Ohtani rookie card, there exists base cards, parallel cards (a base card with various different borders such as yellow, green, gold, etc.), autograph cards, relic cards and the list goes on," Freedman said.

As a result, one website lists a whopping

2,470 variations of Ohtani rookie cards.

But no matter the generation, the initial appearance of a player on a card still produces magic – even to those on the cards.

"Second to signing my first contract," said Hall of Famer Dave Winfield, "for me to appear on my first baseball card was confirmation that I'd made it to Major League Baseball." 📌

David Moriah is a freelance writer from Lawrence, N.J.

GUIDING LIGHT

MANAGERS LIKE TONY LA RUSSA AND TOMMY LASORDA MADE CAREERS OUT OF MENTORING YOUNG PLAYERS.

BY MIKE DIGIOVANNA

Eric Karros was in the on-deck circle in San Diego's Jack Murphy Stadium – preparing for the first at-bat of his rookie season in 1992 – when Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda summoned him to the dugout with a runner on first base and no outs in the first inning.

“He said, ‘Look, I’ve been throwing you batting practice all spring long, you’ve been hitting the heck out of it off me, and I have better [stuff] than this guy out on the mound,’” Karros said, recalling Lasorda’s less-than-flattering assessment of Padres left-hander Craig Lefferts. “And he was dead serious.

“Then he said, ‘He’s gonna throw you something inside, and I need you to turn on it.’ It’s my first start, in my hometown, I’ve got all this adrenaline going, I’m nervous, and then I’m called in from the on-deck circle. Who does that? So I go up to the plate, and I’ll be darned if I don’t get an inside fastball, and I hit it out.”

Karros’ first career homer in that April 9 game keyed a four-run rally in a 6-3 Dodgers win. Karros went on to hit .257 with 20 homers, 30 doubles and 88 RBI to begin a run in which Dodgers players would win five consecutive National League Rookie of the Year Awards under Lasorda.

“All five of us were very different in our own ways,” Karros said, referring to himself and ensuing rookie winners Mike Piazza (1993) Raúl Mondesi (1994), Hideo Nomo (1995) and Todd Hollandsworth (1996).

“Yet the one commonality was Tommy. I think that speaks to Tommy’s ability to be almost chameleon-like in his handling of young players. He figured out what each of us needed, and he supplied that.”



It was the mark of a manager who could bring out the best in the game’s newest players.

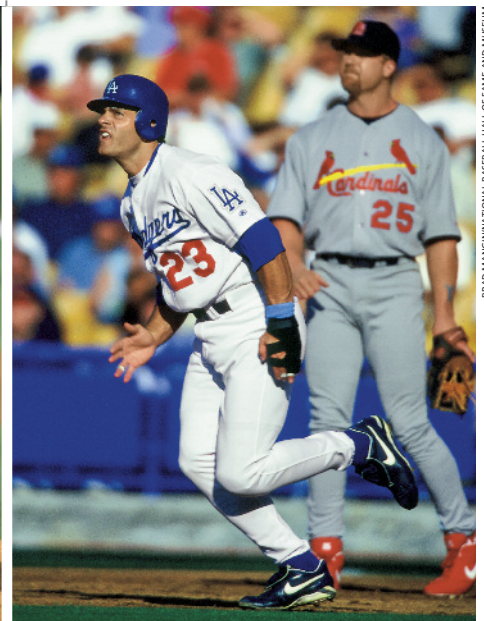
Lasorda won two World Series titles and four NL pennants in his 20-year Hall of Fame managerial career with the Dodgers from 1977 until 1996. And his track record with rookies wasn’t limited to that five-year run in the ’90s.

Rick Sutcliffe (1979), Steve Howe (1980), Fernando Valenzuela (1981) and Steve Sax (1982) also won Rookie of the Year honors under Lasorda, who managed nine rookie winners in all.

“He worked with the younger guys, he would throw BP to us constantly – I don’t know what it was, but he was able to reach us,” Karros said. “Looking back, we weren’t married, we didn’t have families, we didn’t have the other obligations.

“So whether it was, ‘Hey, let’s get on a private plane and go to the Doral Open to have dinner with Jack Nicklaus,’ which he did for me and Piazza, or ‘Let’s go to dinner,’ those things were beyond baseball. Tommy treated us like he was a father figure.”

Hall of Fame manager Tony La Russa, who won three World Series titles – one with



As Dodgers manager, Tommy Lasorda (left) regularly threw batting practice – helping young players like Eric Karros (right) learn the mindset of big league pitchers. Karros won the National League Rookie of the Year Award in 1992, the first of five consecutive Dodgers to earn the honor. Karros is shown with the Cardinals’ Mark McGwire, who was the American League’s 1987 Rookie of the Year.



Above: Tony La Russa managed five Rookie of the Year Award recipients, including four in a row from 1985-88 – the White Sox’s Ozzie Guillen, along with Jose Canseco, Mark McGwire and Walt Weiss of the A’s. “I really didn’t ‘handle’ them,” La Russa said of his approach with the rookies. “It was more recognizing how advanced they could be.” **Left:** The last of La Russa’s Rookie of the Year winners was Albert Pujols of the St. Louis Cardinals in 2001. Pujols clubbed 37 home runs with 130 RBI and a .329 average that season, and in 2019 hit his 650th career round-tripper.

Oakland in 1989 and two with St. Louis in 2006 and 2011 – and six pennants, also had great results with rookies. Six of his players – Ron Kittle (1983) and Ozzie Guillén (1985) with the White Sox, José Canseco (1986), Mark McGwire (1987) and Walt Weiss (1988) with the A’s, and Albert Pujols with the Cardinals in 2001 – won Rookie of the Year honors.

“I didn’t really ‘handle’ them,” La Russa said of his approach to managing rookies. “It was more recognizing how advanced they were. They weren’t the typical young players that you had to be careful with their emotions or coach them into rising to the occasion or protect them from pressure situations so they could develop. You just recognized how special they were and wrote them in there.”

La Russa said it took a village to raise those



BRAD MANNING/NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

Shortstop Walt Weiss earned a promotion with the A's late in 1987 and took over a starting role the following season when he won the AL Rookie of the Year Award. He became an important part of Oakland teams that captured three straight American League pennants from 1988-90.

rookies. His 1985 White Sox team was led by veterans Carlton Fisk and Tom Seaver. Those late 1980s A's clubs featured veterans such as Dave Stewart, Dennis Eckersley and Dave Parker. McGwire, then 37, and Jim Edmonds guided Pujols in 2001.

"Whatever your sport is, whatever the challenge, whether you're Vince Lombardi or Bill Belichick or Gregg Popovich, if your message is not co-signed by the leaders on your team, it's not going to be as effective," La Russa said.

"Because no matter how persuasive you are, when you leave, they're in there by themselves. And you need to keep guys pumping the message about team play and competing and all that stuff."

There were usually early markers to indicate that youngsters were ready to "handle the bright lights of the major leagues and not be intimidated by the step up," La Russa said.

For Weiss, it was a September call-up in 1987, when the 23-year-old shortstop replaced veteran Alfredo Griffin in the heat of a pennant race, hit .462 (12 for 26) and shined defensively in 15 games.

"There were a handful of times when we had a one- or two-run lead in the ninth, one of the last ground balls went to him, and he made plays," La Russa said. "He wasn't tight. He just rose to the occasion. Same thing with his at-bats."

Weiss' ability under pressure prompted Oakland to trade Griffin. Weiss took over in

1988 and combined a solid bat (.250 batting average, 17 doubles in 147 games) with superb glove work to win rookie honors.

For McGwire, it was a refusal to veer an inch from a simple approach that enabled him to hit .289 with an American League-leading 49 homers and a .618 slugging percentage along with 118 RBI in 1987.

"He wanted to keep hitting really basic," La Russa said. "He wasn't into the game-planning that pitchers and catchers do. He didn't want to be distracted by that. He just wanted to see it and hit it."

For Pujols, it was a Spring Training game in late March 2001. Pujols spent most of 2000 at Class A Peoria, and though he was crushing the ball in big league camp, there were doubts he was ready to jump to the big leagues.

"The expectation was that at some point, he's going to go down, and when you have a young guy who's having a really good camp, you want him to leave with confidence, right?" La Russa said. "Well, this guy was so good, we actually tested him to show he's not ready."

La Russa did so – or so he thought – by batting Pujols cleanup in a Grapefruit League game against Montreal's Javier Vázquez, who featured a lively 90-mph fastball, along with a slider, curve and changeup.

"Everyone was thinking this was unfair," La Russa said. "They were saying, 'Are you trying to get him sent out?' The first time

up, he struck out on a slider down and away. He chased it, and I'm thinking, 'OK, see? He's getting exposed.' Next time up, he took the same slider and one-hopped the right-center field wall, and everyone said, 'OK, this guy is for real.'"

Pujols hit .329 with 37 homers, 47 doubles and 130 RBI as a rookie, the start of an illustrious career in which he's won three NL Most Valuable Player Awards and two World Series rings and amassed more than 3,000 hits, 650 homers and 2,000 RBI.

Pujols didn't need much prodding or coddling. The self-driven slugger was a superstar from the get-go and the most feared right-handed hitter in the game for a decade. But he is an exception.

Most first-year players – even those who win Rookie of the Year honors – need some reassurances along the way.

Karros opened 1992 in a first-base platoon. He won the starting job shortly after hitting that first homer, but lost it after a 2-for-25 slump in early May.

"I'm like, 'Kal Daniels is coming off the disabled list, the writing is on the wall, I'm gonna get sent down,'" Karros said. "To Tommy's credit, he used me as a pinch-hitter four times that week."

In a May 20 game against the Cubs, Karros hit what he described as "a thousand-hop grounder that just gets by the mound and rolls into center field." The two-out single sparked a three-run rally in a 5-3 win.

The second pinch hit, on May 22 against Pittsburgh, was a double off the wall. The next night, in the bottom of the ninth, Karros crushed a pinch-hit three-run homer off Pirates closer Stan Belinda for a 5-4 walk-off win.

"I started the next day, never to give up the job," said Karros, who batted .268 with 270 homers in 12 years with the Dodgers. "By Tommy giving me the chance, by pumping me up... I'm not going to say he was in my corner yet, but he was still using me.

"Then he gave me the job. Other than maybe Mike Trout, whenever anybody says, 'Oh, I knew he was gonna be great,' no, you had a break somewhere along the line. For me, I see that 50-hopper up the middle and my life is completely changed, and that's Tommy giving me an opportunity." 📌

Mike DiGiovanna covers baseball for the Los Angeles Times.

OUR THREE SONS

BIGGIO, GUERRERO AND RODRÍGUEZ CELEBRATE THEIR CHILDREN'S SUCCESS IN THE BIG LEAGUES.

BY JOSE DE JESUS ORTIZ

Craig Biggio could hardly contain his emotions, and nobody could blame the Astros icon for divided loyalties as he sat at Minute Maid Park on June 14.

Nonetheless, Biggio maintained an image of impartiality while his wife, Patty, and daughter, Quinn, wore jerseys that were parts of two teams – one half Blue Jays and the other half Astros. Craig and Patty Biggio's oldest son, Conor, wore a Blue Jays jersey over an orange Astros T-shirt.

The Hall of Famer, meanwhile, wore an untucked blue dress shirt, designer jeans and a wide, telling smile as his youngest son, rookie Cavan Biggio of the Blue Jays, prepared to face his hometown Astros for the first time.

Craig Biggio secured his spot in Cooperstown as part of the Class of 2015 after a 20-year major league career, all with the Astros, that saw him collect 3,060 hits. He embodied grit, old-school toughness and pride in playing baseball the right way. Talk to Patty Biggio, however, and there's no doubt that her husband's most treasured accomplishment has been his children.

When asked if she thought Craig had more pride in his career or seeing his own son in the majors, Patty didn't hesitate.

"Oh, definitely seeing his own son for sure," she said. "Craig has always been an unselfish person and always praises other people's success. Now to see his own son do this, I think this is by far – as a father – the greatest moment for him."

On a glorious evening that brought back lots of memories for Cavan Biggio and his father,

there was another Hall of Famer's son in the visiting dugout: Blue Jays slugger Vladimir Guerrero Jr. He could appreciate all the love in Houston, and with it being Father's Day weekend, he knew Biggio's homecoming was even sweeter.

"You feel happy," Guerrero Jr. said. "It's Father's Day, and all of his family is here, and I know he's very proud."

"I think the biggest thing you feel is happiness. You're happy in the sense that because your dad played here, they cheer you. You feel at home. Just imagine, he's been here since he was a kid. He's at home."

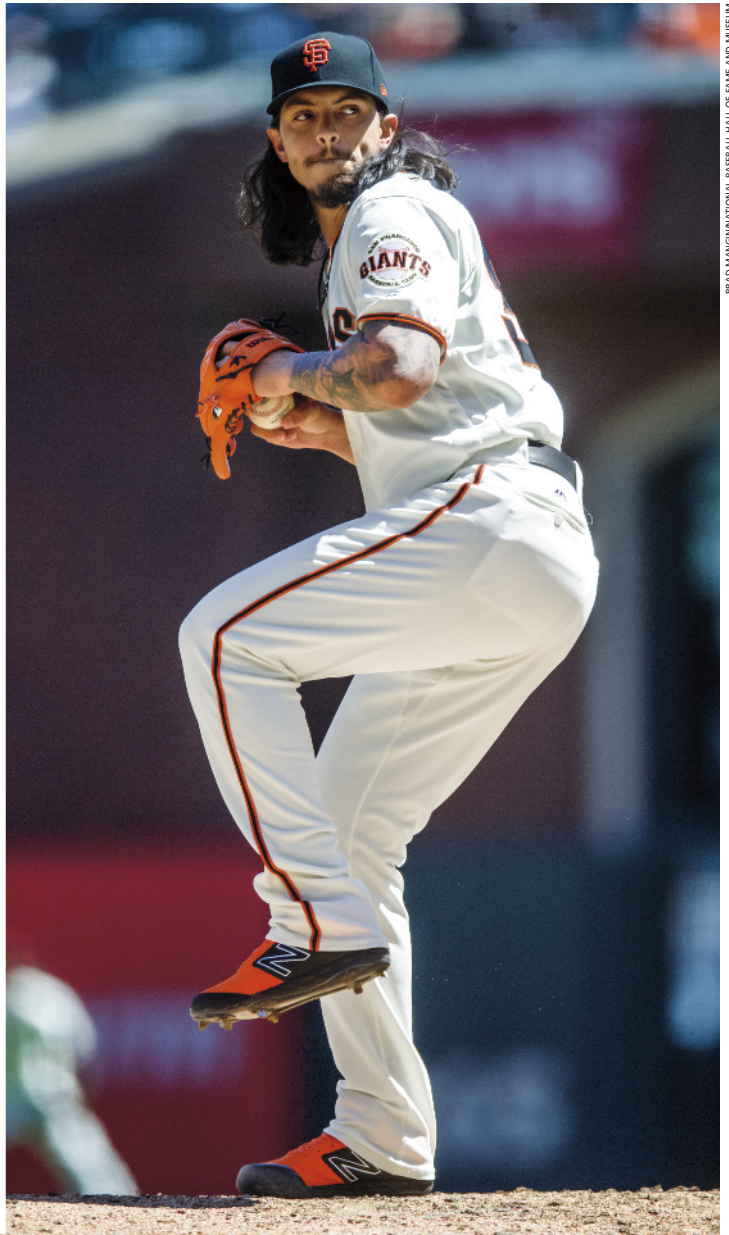
In many ways, Guerrero Jr. has felt at home in Toronto as well. He was born in Montreal when his father, Vladimir Guerrero Sr., played for the Expos, and was practically a household name himself by the time the Blue Jays' front office let him leave his minor league team to attend his father's induction in Cooperstown in 2018.

Guerrero Jr. was considered the top prospect in baseball in the summer of 2018. By then, Derek Rodríguez, the son of 2017 inductee Iván "Pudge" Rodríguez, was already in the majors.

In less than a year, three sons of Hall



Craig Biggio's family celebrates his Hall of Fame election in 2015 on the shores of Otsego Lake in Cooperstown. From left, Cavan Biggio, Quinn Biggio, Craig Biggio, Patty Biggio and Conor Biggio pose with Craig's Hall of Fame plaque. Cavan Biggio made his big league debut with the Blue Jays in 2019.



Left: Vladimir Guerrero Jr. of the Blue Jays hit his first major league home run on May 14, 2019, in San Francisco. Guerrero is the son of Vladimir Guerrero Sr., who was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2018. **Right:** Dereck Rodríguez of the Giants delivers a pitch against the Padres on April 10, 2019, at Oracle Park in San Francisco. Rodríguez, the son of 2017 Hall of Fame inductee Iván Rodríguez, is one of three sons of Hall of Famers currently playing in the big leagues.

of Famers made their MLB debuts. Rodríguez led the way, taking the mound for the Giants on May 29, 2018, at 25 years old. Guerrero Jr. made his highly anticipated debut with the Blue Jays on April 26, 2019, at 20 years old.

"I feel very happy," Guerrero Sr. said. "You know, he is my first son. I never pushed him to play baseball, but since he was [about] 3 years old, he took one of my bats in Montreal and he used to swing.

"I think you feel happy to see him grow up and now being 20 to be in the major leagues. I pray to God to give him health because I believe he could do a good job."

Biggio followed Rodríguez and Guerrero

to the majors this past May 24 at the age of 24, becoming the 15th son of a Hall of Famer to play in the big leagues. The other Hall of Famers and their sons to reach the majors are: Earl Averill Sr. and Jr., Freddie Lindstrom and Charlie Lindstrom, Eddie Collins Sr. and Jr., Jim O'Rourke and Queenie O'Rourke, Ed Augustine Walsh and Ed Arthur Walsh, Tony Gwynn Sr. and Jr., Yogi and Dale Berra, Connie and Earle Mack, George and Dave and Dick Sisler, Tony Pérez and Eduardo Pérez and Tim Lincecum Sr. and Jr.

As far as Guerrero and Biggio are concerned, they're more focused on helping the young

Blue Jays succeed than trying to live up to their legendary fathers' legacies.

"They did their job, and we're doing our own job now," Guerrero Jr. said. "We're just here trying to help our team win."

With that said, there is something special about playing in the majors against your dad's old team in the city where you grew up.

"I always wanted to play in this stadium, whether or not it was with 'Astros' on my chest," Cavan said.

Cavan was only 4 years old when his father played his last game at the Astrodome. Most of his memories of his father's career are at Minute Maid Park, which opened in 2000

and where the Biggio brothers were constant fixtures in the home clubhouse. In one of the most memorable moments in Astros history, Craig Biggio famously lifted Cavan into his arms near second base in 2007 – moments after collecting his 3,000th hit.

Being part of those experiences can provide a leg up for a young ballplayer.

“Obviously they need the skill set to have a chance to make the majors,” Craig Biggio said. “Also, if they were old enough to see what their dad did (as a major leaguer), they had a golden opportunity to see how he acted and how his teammates acted day in and day out.

“I think that’s huge in the industry because you get a little bit of a head start because you understand it,” Biggio continued. “You’ve still got to go out there and perform. Don’t get me wrong, it’s extremely difficult. But I think it’s exciting for me and I’m sure a lot of the other pro guys to see their sons... make it.”

Cavan and his brother used to hold fake press conferences at Minute Maid Park as kids. They would go into the media conference room, sit behind the mic, pretend they were former manager Phil Garner and talk about their father collecting the game-winning hit.

On June 14, after batting leadoff and driving in the Blue Jays’ lone two runs in a loss to the Astros, Cavan sat near his father in the Minute Maid Park media conference room for a real press conference.

“It feels great,” Patty Biggio said. “It feels very natural. It’s a place he grew up in, a place he feels very comfortable at. We’re just so excited for him and so proud of how hard he’s worked to get to this moment of having a dream of his come true.

“Playing at Minute Maid has always been a dream of his, either as an Astro or any team. Seeing him so excited makes us so happy.”

Guerrero was among the AL’s top rookies in 2019, slugging 15 home runs and batting .272, and stole the show in the Home Run Derby during All-Star Game festivities at Cleveland’s Progressive Field. He finished second, even though his father advised him to skip the long-ball competition.

Guerrero Sr. missed attending the derby in person because he had business back in his native Dominican Republic.

“Thank God I saw him with many people in my home, and we were proud of the job he did,” Guerrero Sr. said. “Like we say, ‘He



FAMILY TIES

Hall of Famer Carl Yastrzemski embraces his grandson, Mike Yastrzemski of the Giants, prior to throwing out the first pitch on Sept. 18 at Boston’s Fenway Park. Mike Yastrzemski made his big league debut in 2019 and hit .272 with 21 homers and 55 RBI for San Francisco.



BILLY WEISS/BOSTON RED SOX

didn’t just shut me up; he shut those up that didn’t want him to go.’ But I knew he could do a good job.”

Rodríguez has thrown 217.1 innings across two major league seasons, posting a 4.10 ERA and winning 12 games. Pudge has watched most of those innings, and having handled so many pitchers over his career, he usually knows exactly what pitch his son will throw.

Unsurprisingly, he agonizes over close calls that go against his son.

“You just try to be composed,” he said. “But when it’s a close call, obviously I don’t scream at the umpire, but I [make] a little face or something.”

Biggio was a steady producer while serving as a super utility player during his rookie campaign, totaling 16 home runs in 354 at-bats and adding 14 stolen bases.

As fate would have it, he actually played his father’s old position, second base, at Minute Maid Park in his first visit home. He even collected the first double of his career there,

which was quite poetic because his father was known as one of the best doubles hitters of his era.

“I think it’s a lot harder to watch them do it because the one thing that I control is myself,” Craig Biggio said. “I don’t control him. He’s pretty good. He understands himself. It’s like anything; It’s a hard game.

“The guy that’s throwing the ball at you is pretty good. The guy that’s catching the ball is pretty good. Everybody’s pretty good. It was definitely easier for me when I played because I controlled everything. Now watching, you have a different perspective on things.”

For Craig Biggio, Iván Rodríguez and Vladimir Guerrero Sr., *their perspective* is a Hall of Fame perspective. 📌

Jose de Jesus Ortiz, who covered the Astros from 2001 through 2015 for The Houston Chronicle, is the Supervising Editor for La Vida Baseball and former lead columnist at The St. Louis Post-Dispatch.



King of the Rooks

The term “rookie” is almost as old as baseball itself, and first-year phenoms have been enthralling fans for more than a century.

BY MATT KELLY

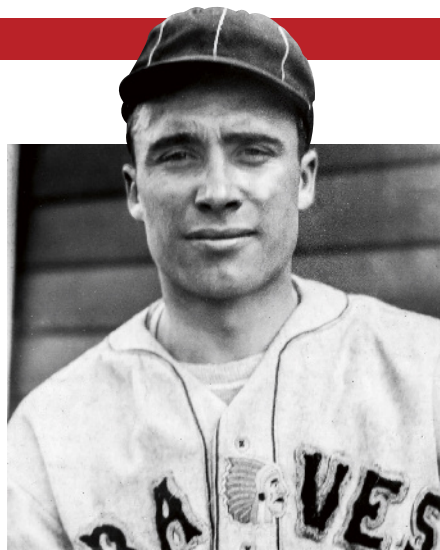
America’s fascination with baseball phenoms is nearly as old as the sport itself, and that’s especially true with prodigious rookies.

Take, for example, Walter Johnson. His box score lines with his semipro team in Weiser, Idaho, were sent across the country via telegram in 1907, reporting he threw the ball “so fast nobody can see it.” (Weiser residents tried to convince Johnson to stay, offering him a cigar store on the town square.)

Later, an 18-year-old Bob Feller found himself on the cover of *Time* magazine in April 1937, eight months after he struck out 15 St. Louis Browns in his first major league start. And Bernard Malamud’s *The Natural* lives on to this day, thanks to the aura surrounding its central character, 34-year-old rookie Roy Hobbs.

Baseball itself predates the word “rookie” – but not by much. British poet Rudyard Kipling was the first to use the word in widespread text in 1892 – 16 years after the founding of the National League – writing: “So ‘ark an’ ‘eed, you rookies, which is always grumblin’ sore,” in reference to recruits to the Queen’s army.

The term wasn’t used in baseball until 1908, per “Dickson’s Baseball Dictionary,” when *The Washington Post* somberly stated that the “extra choice rookies touted to shunt the ancient and honorable members from their jobs are as lonesome as the strawberry on the roof of the shortcake.” Baseball’s immense



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

Wally Berger hit 38 home runs as a rookie with the Boston Braves in 1930, a National League record that stood until 2017.

popularity at that time likely brought the word “rookie” to greater prominence outside of military jargon.

But the Baseball Writers’ Association of America’s Rookie of the Year Award has a surprisingly shorter history; the award only celebrated its 70th birthday two years ago. Physical tokens of rookie appreciation were sparse during the first half of the 20th century, at least in the public record. San Francisco Mayor Angelo Rossi gave Joe DiMaggio, one of the period’s most celebrated rookies, the key to the city after he returned home from leading the Yankees to the 1936 World Series title.

A top rookie honor wasn’t installed in any official capacity until 1940, when the BBWAA’s Chicago chapter selected future Hall of Famer Lou Boudreau as the top first-year player and continued voting on freshmen through ’46. That’s when the *Sporting News*

began its own Rookie of the Year Award (an honor the publication still hands out to this day) and honored Phillies outfielder Del Ennis as the majors’ top newcomer. The national BBWAA voting body joined the mix the following year, honoring Jackie Robinson with its first official Rookie of the Year Award.

The winners who followed Robinson are well documented and well known to passionate fans and trivia buffs. But here’s a quick look at some rookie campaigns that captured the country’s imagination before the BBWAA established its award.

Christy Mathewson, 1901

Mathewson debuted with the Giants the previous July, but New York employed him as little more than a batting-practice pitcher, prompting Mathewson to write to a friend: “I don’t give a rap whether they sign me or not,” at the end of the season. The Giants sent him back to the minor league club in Norfolk, Va., that winter, and then the Reds signed him for \$100 and promptly dealt him right back to the Giants for Amos Rusie.

Mathewson went on to win 20 games, record a 2.41 ERA and throw a no-hitter in his first full campaign, inspiring Manhattanites to call him “The Big Six” in honor of the local fire company that was fastest to put out a fire.

Grover Cleveland Alexander, 1911

The Phillies paid the Syracuse Stars \$500 for Alexander’s services late in the 1910 season, \$2,500 less than they gave Scranton for fellow right-hander George Chalmers. But the son of a Nebraska farmer took many by surprise and bulldozed NL hitters the following year, setting rookie records for wins (28, still the top modern-era mark for rooks) and strikeouts (227) while compiling a 2.57 ERA. “Old Pete” was the pitcher of record in 35 percent of the fourth-place Phillies’ victories that season.

Shoeless Joe Jackson, 1911

Jackson won minor league batting titles with Savannah and New Orleans but struggled in two cups of coffee with the A’s, prompting Connie Mack to trade him to Cleveland. There, Jackson simply battered AL pitching in 1911. He racked up 233 hits, including 45 doubles and 19 triples, and finished runner-up to Ty Cobb in the batting race with a .408 average – still a modern-era record for any



Left: Paul Waner (left) hit .336 and led the big leagues with 22 triples as a rookie with the Pirates in 1926. A year later, Waner's brother Lloyd (right) joined the Bucs and recorded 223 hits and scored 133 runs in his rookie season. **Right:** Joe DiMaggio poses for a photo at Fenway Park during his rookie season of 1936. One of the most heralded rookies of his time, DiMaggio hit 39 home runs and drove in 125 runs that year to lead the Yankees to the first of four straight World Series championships.

qualified rookie by a full 35 points. Babe Ruth would tell Grantland Rice eight years later that he modeled his left-handed swing after Jackson's.

Paul and Lloyd Waner, 1926 and '27

The Waner household (or maybe more appropriately, the Pirates' clubhouse) must have had a heck of a debate about who was the better rookie, after each brother dominated his first taste of big league pitching with Pittsburgh. In 1926, Paul hit .336 and paced the majors with 22 triples while finishing 12th in NL MVP voting; Lloyd followed in '27 with a .355 average, a league-best 133 runs and a sixth-place showing in the MVP vote. "Big Poison" and "Little Poison" as Paul and Lloyd came to be not-so-affectionately known to rival pitchers, combined for 5,611 hits over their Hall of Fame careers.

Wally Berger, 1930

Berger's 38 homers for the Boston Braves stood as the NL's rookie mark (alongside Frank Robinson, who hit 38 in 1956) for

nearly nine decades until the Dodgers' Cody Bellinger topped it by one in 2017. Interest in Berger's talent was so high that he held out before his rookie season, but proved he was worth the negotiations as he also set a rookie mark by driving in 119 runs for the sixth-place Braves. Eighteen of Berger's 38 dingers came in his first 50 career games, also a record that stood until the Yankees' Gary Sánchez reached 19 in 2016.

Joe DiMaggio, 1936

Joltin' Joe looked back on his rookie year as fondly as any season of his career (he proudly wore his 1936 World Series ring for the rest of his life), and Mickey Mantle might be the only player whose debut generated as much interest as DiMaggio's in the Bronx. Anticipation built after DiMaggio, who the Yankees purchased for a whopping \$25,000, hit .398, clubbed 34 homers and drove in 154 runs for the PCL's San Francisco Seals in '35. It nearly boiled over when a foot injury delayed DiMaggio's debut until early May 1936.

DiMaggio went 3-for-6 with a triple in his first game and never looked back, finishing with a major league-best 15 three-baggers, 29 homers and 125 RBI to go with his .323 average and .576 slugging percentage. He then hit .346 against the Giants in the World Series to help the Yankees claim their first title of the post-Babe Ruth era.

Ted Williams, 1939

The Splendid Splinter's rookie-record 145 RBI in 1939 seem less likely to be matched with each passing year (Albert Pujols' 130 in 2001 are the closest attempt this century, and Williams' 1.045 OPS has only been topped once by any freshman since: Aaron Judge's 1.049 in 2017). Williams mastered the strike zone immediately, ranking second in the AL with 107 walks while striking out just 64 times. Williams always aimed to be the greatest hitter who ever lived, and his debut season put him directly on that path. 🍌

Matt Kelly is a freelance writer from Brooklyn, N.Y.

BAG-FULL OF MEMORIES

JEFF BAGWELL'S CAREER PATH WAS FULL OF CURVES BUT TOOK HIM STRAIGHT TO COOPERSTOWN.

BY HAL BODLEY

Jeff Bagwell often wonders... What would have happened had his beloved Red Sox not traded him to Houston?

Or where would he be today if he'd not accepted the offer to switch from third base to first?

It's been said that life's darkest moments are followed by the good. And that everything happens for a reason.

For Jeffrey Robert Bagwell, nothing could be more accurate.

Those monumental events have been reported over and over again, but it would be remiss not to mention them when you chronicle the Hall of Famer's brilliant career.

Sure, you can talk about how he played his entire 15-year career in the majors with Houston, how he was the anchor of the famed Killer B's, a powerful first baseman with 449 homers and a run-producing machine.

And, arguably, the greatest slugger in Astros history.

Or this from former teammate Brad Ausmus, former manager of the Angels: "For me what stands out is he was the most respected player in the clubhouse. That says it all."



Jeff Bagwell played 15 seasons in the big leagues, all with the Astros. He amassed 449 home runs, 1,529 RBI and 202 stolen bases to go with a .408 on-base percentage.

Bagwell, now 51, became one of the best first basemen of his era and is synonymous with a golden age of Houston Astros baseball. He was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2017, joining former teammate Craig Biggio – who punched his Cooperstown ticket two years earlier.

Bagwell is Houston's all-time leader in homers, runs batted in (1,529) and walks (1,401). He

ranks second behind Biggio in hits (2,314), total bases (4,213) and games played (2,150). He boasted a .297 lifetime batting average.

Bagwell was the 1994 National League MVP and was named to four All-Star Games. But it was his selection as the 1991 NL Rookie of the Year that elevated him to the lofty status of superstar and the beginning of his road to the Hall of Fame. He batted .294 with 15 homers and 82 RBI in his first season with the Astros.

Bagwell was born in Boston and grew up in Killington, Conn., where he and his family were devoted Red Sox fans. Bagwell played a variety of sports, including soccer in which he excelled, at Xavier High School, but it was at the University of Hartford – along with two summers in the renowned Cape Cod League – where he began to attract the attention of baseball scouts.

For Bagwell, it was a dream come true when the Red Sox drafted him in 1989's fourth round. He played that summer at Winter Haven (Fla.) and in 1990 was promoted to the New Britain Red Sox of the Double-A Eastern League.

Those moments all preceded "The Trade."

Bagwell was the Eastern League's MVP, batting .333 with four homers and 61 RBI as a third baseman in 1990. Keep in mind that the Red Sox already had Wade Boggs at that position.

"I was having a great year in Double-A," Bagwell said. "Butch Hobson, our manager, said one day, 'You're pushing for a call-up.' I said, 'A call-up to what?' He said a call-up to the big leagues. And then I got traded on August 31st – to Houston!"

The Red Sox were in search of relief pitching to improve their chances of making the playoffs. General manager Lou Gorman contacted the Astros about reliever Larry Andersen and Bagwell was mentioned as a possibility.

Originally, the Astros balked, but ultimately accepted Bagwell for Andersen in a deal that has since been labeled one of the most one-sided trades in baseball history.

"It was the worst day ever, but more for my family than me," Bagwell said. "My dad, mom and even my grandmother lived and died with the Red Sox. For me, it was more that I didn't

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Jeff Bagwell was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2017. He joined former Astros teammate Craig Biggio in Cooperstown, with Biggio having been elected in 2015.

understand it. I was having a great year in Double-A, hitting .333.”

Bagwell recalled the aftermath of the trade: “My dad came to pick me up and said, ‘I think this is a really good move for you.’ I just didn’t understand the business of baseball. I was just going about my business of playing baseball.

“Back then, we didn’t have social media, we didn’t have MLB Network, the coverage we have today. The great thing about that whole situation and what I tell the kids in the minor leagues, ‘Don’t worry about who’s (the player) in front of you. Just do what you can do. Either they promote you or trade you.’

“I was having this great year in the minors, and then, all of a sudden, I get traded to the Astros.”

Pausing a moment, he added: “And then I made the team out of Spring Training and, believe me, it was the biggest blessing of my career.”

Add to that the move from third base to first. Boggs, who would become a Hall of Famer,

was blocking any chance Bagwell had to take over third for the Red Sox.

During the Astros’ 1991 Spring Training at Kissimmee, Fla., Bagwell played most of his games at third base, but Ken Caminiti had been the team’s starter there the previous two seasons.

“My dad was in Spring Training and watching Cami play. He was something like 10-for-10 at the plate,” Bagwell recalled. “Dad looked at me and said, ‘Well, going to Tucson (the Astros’ Triple-A team) won’t be so bad.’ I didn’t know what to think.

“So, with about 10 days to go in the spring, I thought I was going to get sent down. That’s about the time when Bob Watson (of the Astros’ front office) approached me and said in no uncertain terms: ‘You can play third base in Tucson or first base in the big leagues.’ Now, I’m not the brightest guy in the world, but easily could figure that one out. Then I got this crash course playing first base.”

Yes, Bagwell agreed, “Bad things make good things happen.”

But first base?

“Unless I was the starting shortstop, playing first base is just great,” he said. “You get to talk to everybody, whether it be the umpires, the first base coach, the players.”

He even got to speak with Ozzie Smith, who himself was working on the tail end of his Hall of Fame career.

“I remember it vividly,” Bagwell said. “The moment was incredible. Ozzie got on first and asked me, ‘How you doing, how’s it going at first base?’ I said, ‘Well, I’m struggling with my backhand. He said ‘You got to get out in front more, blah, blah, blah.’ I get back to the dugout and say, ‘Oh, my god. Ozzie Smith just gave me a fielding lesson.’ It was crazy.”

Three seasons after winning the Rookie of the Year Award, Bagwell was the unanimous winner of the NL MVP for the strike-shortened 1994 season, batting .368 with 39 homers and 116 RBI. He was the first player in the franchise’s history to receive that recognition.

José Altuve became the second Astros player



MICHAEL PONZINATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

Jeff Bagwell began his pro baseball career as a third baseman, but switched to first base in 1991. That season, Bagwell was named the National League Rookie of the Year.

to win the honor; in 2017, he was the American League MVP. (After 51 seasons in the NL, Houston moved to the AL in 2013.)

It was also in 2017 when the Astros won their first World Series championship, defeating the Los Angeles Dodgers. It was fitting that Bagwell and Biggio, so important in building a winning franchise, were presented World Series rings.

Bagwell's 1994 season ended two days before the Aug. 12 players strike when a pitch from San Diego's Andy Benes broke his left hand.

Biggio said, "There was nothing he couldn't do that year. Jeff Bagwell was just absolutely crazy."

Ah, yes, Craig Biggio.

He and Bagwell were the cornerstones for an incredible era of Astros baseball. There were four NL Central Division titles, six Postseason appearances – and Houston's first World Series, in 2005, in which the Astros were defeated by the Chicago White Sox.

An arthritic right shoulder hampered Bagwell near the end of his career and led to his retirement

in 2006 during Spring Training. He says he never dreamed of being elected to the Hall of Fame.

"It's a weird thing to be a Hall of Famer," he said. "The first time I wrote it on a baseball was kind of crazy."

Sunday night, after each Induction Ceremony, there's a Hall of Famers-only dinner.

"My first year there, one of my family members asked, 'Well, who did you sit next to?' I said, 'Who cares? Any seat at that table is a great seat.'" Bagwell said. "It is a special time when it's just the Hall of Fame guys. It's really the best part of the weekend."

Today, Bagwell is living a quiet life. Married to Rachel, they have five children between them.

"I have to maneuver them around to different schools and activities. That has become a big focus of my life," he said. "I'm not so much in the spotlight, which is kind of nice now."

"The fans and the people (in Houston) have been wonderful to us, which has made the transition easy. But I still miss the game. I don't

necessarily miss the day-in, day-out grind, especially with how my shoulder was at the end. That made it difficult, but I certainly do miss being around my teammates and the coaches.

"Yes, I have been blessed. When I got hurt, I found out how to be an extra guy, and I was the Astros' hitting coach for two-and-a-half months, so that made me appreciate even more the amount of time the coaches put in for the players every single day. I still stay involved with that part of the game, so that's what I enjoy."

Bagwell jokes when he says he considers himself "a baseball lifer." Just as quickly, he adds: "Baseball doesn't define me as a person. It's what I do with my kids and as a husband that defines me."

Yet...

"Baseball is something that's in our blood and it's difficult to get out," he said, choosing his words carefully. "Maybe it's the mental part. Giving guys back stuff we have already been through. I don't go into the clubhouse and talk about, 'I did this, I did that.' I try to say, 'I did this or that when I was struggling; I get how you're feeling.'"

"This is what we did and it's our passion. That's the special bond we all have and it never leaves us."

Ausmus agrees.

"We had a lot of fun together," he said. "He played the game the right way. He was a quiet leader, never stood on a soapbox in the middle of the clubhouse and started yelling. He would talk to individuals when something needed to be addressed. He mostly led by the way he carried himself, the way he handled himself with the media and the way he played the game."

Bagwell is on a roll talking baseball, before abruptly stopping when asked what he thinks his legacy will be.

"I was a player who could be counted on every day to play," he finally said. "I showed up whether I was hurt or not; what I did became boring, because that was me. It was something my teammates could count on."

And then: "If my teammates were happy being my teammates and they thought I was accountable and available, that's all I could ask for." 🍎

Hal Bodley, dean of American baseball writers, is correspondent emeritus for MLB.com. He has been covering Major League Baseball since 1958 and was a USA TODAY baseball editor/columnist for 25 years.

FRAMING THE FUTURE

HIGH-SPEED VIDEO ANALYSIS OF 1980s WHITE SOX PLAYERS IS NOW A PART OF MUSEUM COLLECTION.

BY ROGER LANSING

With today's computer 3-D models and statistical analytics available to baseball fans and coaches alike, an idea presented more than 40 years ago to Roland Hemond by a young professor of biomechanics may seem quaint.

But when Dr. Robert Shapiro's plan to use a high-speed camera to film starting pitchers during actual games was adopted by the Chicago White Sox in the early 1980s, he set into motion a concept that can be directly linked to MLB's Statcast and other important analytic technologies in use today.

The results of that groundbreaking work are now preserved at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.

"I always loved baseball and had played as a kid and in college," Shapiro said. "I was at Penn State, working as an assistant in the Sports Research Lab, which was part of the Biomechanics Group. At the time, I was amazed that I could use my math and science knowledge to do work in sports, and I completed my master's thesis on batting in baseball."

Following his master's degree work, Shapiro

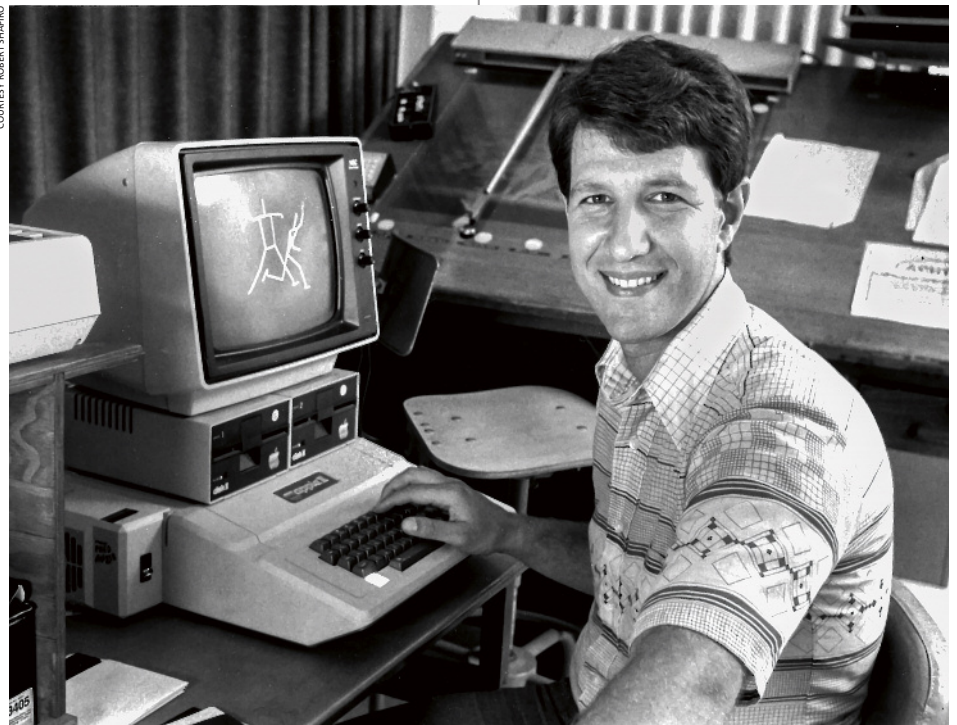
began his doctoral studies with Charles Dillman, an associate professor at the University of Illinois-Champaign. Dillman had worked with the Phillies, and the duo broached the subject of cameras as an analytics tool with Bill Veeck, owner of the White Sox.

"We wrote [Veeck] a letter and he invited us to meet with Roland Hemond, who was the general manager," Shapiro said. "They allowed us to do some batting practice with the team. We collected some bats and marked them up, did some 3-D filming that didn't quite work out... but we also did high-speed filming of their hitters. We presented the film and they were amazed, because they hadn't seen anything like that.

"They had used regular film, 30 frames per second, and slowed it down, but the quality of that isn't very good. The high-speed film cameras shoot at 250 frames per second. To see the batters at that speed really amazed them."

From there, Dr. Shapiro took a job as a professor of biomechanics at Northern Illinois University and began to set up a lab there. Noting his experience with baseball, NIU asked Shapiro to teach a baseball coaching class to the physical education students. On a whim, he reached out to Hemond to ask if he could bring his class to meet with one of the White Sox coaches prior to a game.

Hemond, the Hall of Fame's 2011 Buck



COURTESY ROBERT SHAPIRO

Robert Shapiro was a professor at Northern Illinois University in the '80s when he started filming Chicago White Sox pitchers.



RONALD C. MODRAGETTY IMAGES

Hall of Famer Tom Seaver pitched for the White Sox for three seasons from 1984-86 and was part of a groundbreaking project by Robert Shapiro to film ballplayers to understand their biomechanical processes.

O'Neil Lifetime Achievement Award winner, was happy to oblige and arranged for the class to meet with coach Bobby Winkles. Hemond invited Shapiro to join him for dinner before the game; that's when Shapiro mentioned his idea about using high-speed cameras to film game footage of the starting pitchers.

Hemond asked Shapiro to write a proposal and send it to him. He did, but Veeck was not interested in funding research.

Shortly thereafter, though, Veeck sold the team – and new owner Jerry Reinsdorf took over and brought in a whole new medical staff.

“Suddenly, I get a call from Roland

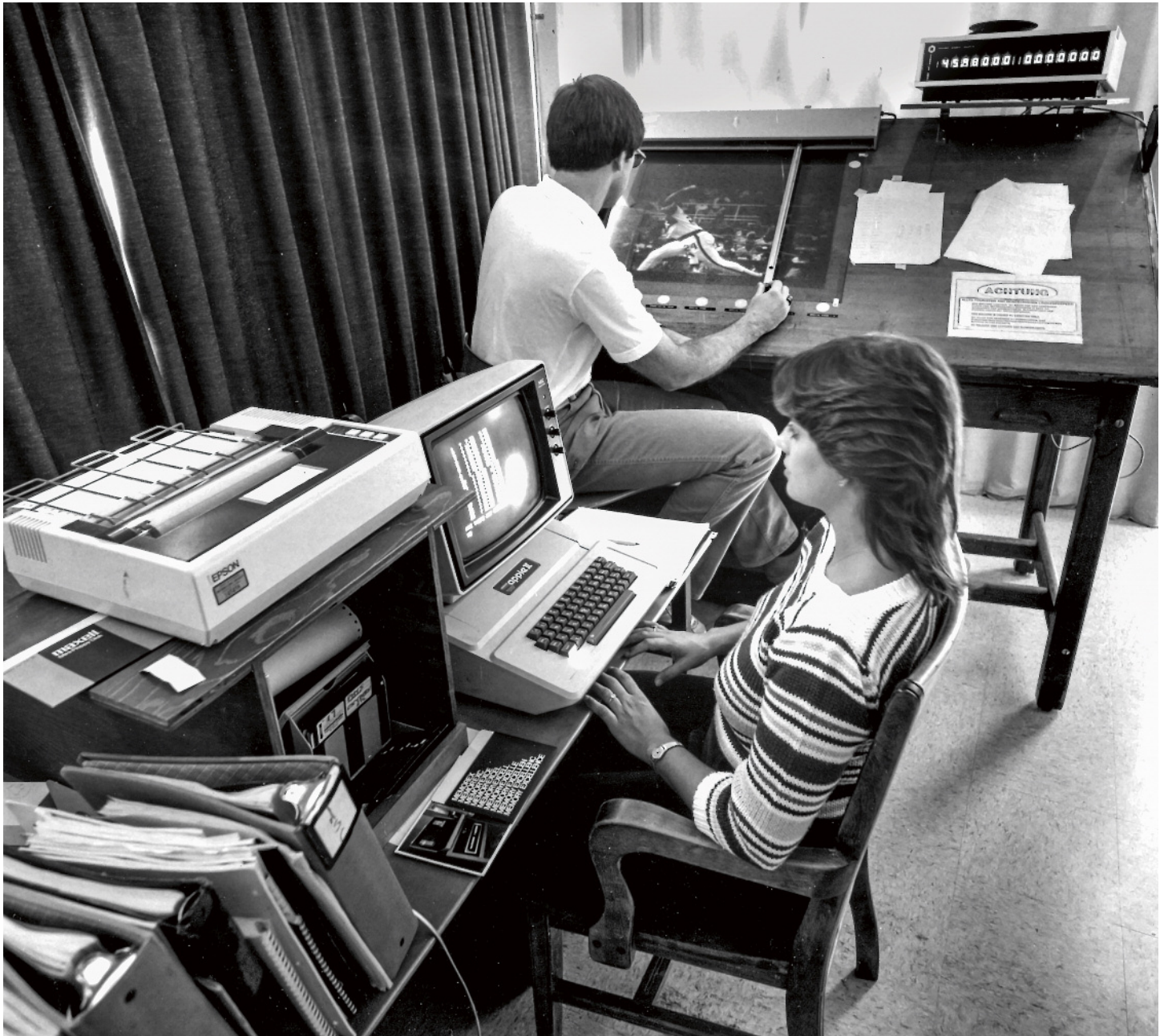
Hemond telling me that Jim Boscardin (Dr. James Boscardin, White Sox team physician) was interested in talking to me about my research,” Shapiro said. “He and I met and from there we collaborated on the entire study. Manager Tony La Russa and pitching coach Dave Duncan were really interested.

“We had some film that we had taken earlier (during the Veeck years) and Duncan was very excited to see what we had. He had been a catcher and was seeing things in the pitchers' motion that he had never seen before. So we put together a group of NIU students to help and started shooting films. We would

go to the ballpark during day games, since there wasn't enough light at night to shoot high-speed film.

“As far as I know, no one else was taking films like that during major league games in major league ballparks,” Shapiro added. “The White Sox organization and Northern Illinois University were very supportive of the entire project.”

Shapiro's team filmed the White Sox starting pitchers in regular-season games in 1982, and then in Spring Training and the regular season from 1983 into 1989, continuing their work even after Shapiro became a professor of biomechanics at



Students at the Northern Illinois University biomechanics lab digitize film of Chicago White Sox players taken by Dr. Robert Shapiro in the mid-1980s. The film is now part of the collection at the Baseball Hall of Fame.

the University of Kentucky in 1985. The high-speed films include members of the White Sox pitching staff – Tom Seaver, Floyd Bannister, Jerry Koosman and LaMarr Hoyt – along with some opposing pitchers such as Hall of Famer Bert Blyleven, the Yankees’ Ron Guidry and the Royals’ Larry Gura. They also did some high-speed filming of White Sox batters, including 2019 Hall of Fame inductee Harold Baines.

“In 1982, it seemed like LaMarr Hoyt started every Sunday day game. We shot a lot of film of him in ‘82,” Shapiro said.

Duncan analyzed his pitchers’ performances

using the films that Shapiro’s team collected, and whether or not it made a difference, the fact remains that Hoyt won the American League Cy Young Award in 1983.

Today, those high-speed films and videos, more than 80 in total, along with the biomechanical analysis report prepared from the films and video by Dr. Shapiro and his team, are part of the Dr. Robert Shapiro film collection after having been donated to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.

“For a kid who wanted to grow up to be Mickey Mantle, knowing that some of my

work is in the Hall of Fame, it’s amazing,” Shapiro said. “I am at a loss for words. Before, I used to tell people the unique thing about me was that I was at Woodstock, but this tops that.”

“I am really appreciative of the fact that the Hall of Fame is taking these films and preserving them. To know that high-speed game film of pitchers like Tom Seaver and others will be preserved. I don’t think that there is anything else like that in existence.” 📌

Roger Lansing is the recorded media manager at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.



Our Museum in Action

These ongoing projects are just a few of the ways the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum's mission is being supported today.

BASEBALLHALL.ORG/MUSEUMINACTION

WHAT WE'VE DONE TOGETHER

Museum benches

Thanks to generous gifts from Country Casual Teak (a Museum sponsor and bench manufacturer), Edward and Marilyn Foote and the Vermont Mountaineers baseball organization – a member of the New England Collegiate Baseball League (NECBL) – three new benches have been added to the Museum and grounds to enhance our visitor experience.

There are a number bench spaces still available on the Museum grounds and other important areas as part of this program. Donors supporting the installation of a bench with a gift of \$2,500 will be recognized with an engraved 8" x 2" brass plaque on the bench, allowing up to three lines of text that may be used to honor a loved one or your favorite baseball legend.

You can learn more about the Museum Bench Program at baseballhall.org/benchprogram.

S.S. John McGraw christening bottle

With generous grant support from the Greater Hudson Heritage Network, a christening bottle used for the S.S. John J. McGraw will receive much-needed conservation work. McGraw's widow, Blanche, swung a Louisville Slugger bat – with the silk-wrapped bottle attached – into the bow of the boat, christening the vessel.

Named for New York Giants player-manager John McGraw, the World War II Liberty

Ship brought supplies both to troops and civilians in need around the world. The vessel, one of over 2,700 such ships, launched on Sept. 22, 1943.

The NYSCA/GHHN Conservation Treatment Grant Program is made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Photos to be digitally preserved

Thanks to a number of generous donors, photographs from our archive will be digitally preserved and added to our online digital collection, which you can browse at collection.baseballhall.org.

They include:

- **Henry Aaron** – Thanks to a gift from Debra J. Williams
- **Earl Averill** – Thanks to a gift from Paul D. Phillips
- **Earle Combs** – Thanks to a gift from Paul Anishanslin, John Greenthal and Rollie Loewen
- **Roger Connor** – Thanks to a gift from Greg Kelley
- **Chick Hafey** – Thanks to a gift from Andy Dean, Jonathan Epstein, Robert Hebden, Benjamin Wright and John Wright
- **Al Kaline** – Thanks to a gift from Jeffrey Archambault
- **George Kelly** – Thanks to a gift from Benjamin Wright and an anonymous donor
- **Willie Mays** – Thanks to a gift from Stuart Director, Bruce Director, Nash Van Dyke and an anonymous donor
- **Frank Robinson** – Thanks to a gift from Daniel P. Carmichael and Victoria Risley
- **Hack Wilson** – Thanks to a gift from Robert Cavaliere

WHAT YOU CAN HELP US DO

Moe Berg spikes

They say you can't understand someone until you've walked a mile in their shoes, but a mile is not enough to truly fathom the enigmatic Moe Berg, who wore these baseball shoes (below) during his 15-season big league career that spanned the 1920s and '30s. The fascinating



These spikes, worn by Moe Berg during his 15-year big league career, are part of the Museum's collection and are in need of conservation work. After his playing days, Berg became a spy for the Office of Strategic Services during World War II.

MILO STEWART / NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

story of this quintessential “good field, no hit” catcher reaches well beyond the diamond.

Berg displayed a relentless passion for knowledge by studying languages, law, history and literature at world-renowned universities such as NYU, Princeton, Columbia and the Sorbonne in Paris. An avid world traveler, he joined the Office of Strategic Services as an international spy during World War II, surreptitiously gleaning key information on how close the Nazis were to developing an atomic weapon. The O.S.S. even authorized the ballplayer-turned-secret agent to assassinate Werner Heisenberg if Berg felt the German physicist was close to making a nuclear bomb.

But Berg may be most famous for his mysterious and often baffling behavior. He obsessed over newspapers, reading them in their entirety, but shunning copies that had been touched by others. He owned multiple, identical dark gray suits, wearing the anonymous outfit almost every day of his adult life. And he sometimes passed friends on the street with nothing more than a knowing eye and a finger pressed to his lips as if to say, “You never saw me.”

The Hall of Fame’s exhibit, *Moe Berg: Big League Spy*, explores the life of the scholar/catcher/spy. By helping preserve these shoes, you can keep Berg’s unusual story alive, for today, tomorrow and years to come.

Estimate for conservation to be performed
B.R. Howard and Associates: \$2,000

Digitally preserve historic photos of the Hall of Fame classes of 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990

We need your help to continue our work to digitally preserve the Museum’s photo collection, which contains more than 300,000 images. You can help us to preserve the images of the classes of 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Cost to digitally preserve images of:

Class of 1986

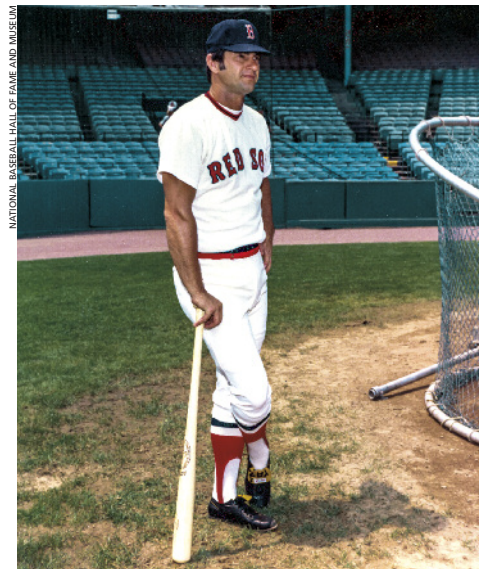
Bobby Doerr (50 images):.....\$250
 Ernie Lombardi (80 images):.....\$400
 Willie McCovey (76 images):\$380

Class of 1987

Ray DandridgeFUNDED
 Catfish Hunter (68 images):.....\$350
 Billy Williams (56 images):\$280

Class of 1988

Willie Stargell (94 images):.....\$470



You can help digitally preserve images of Hall of Famers from the Museum’s collection, which include such legends as (clockwise from top left) Carl Yastrzemski, Willie Stargell and Joe Morgan.

Class of 1989

Al Barlick (12 images):.....\$60
 Johnny Bench (119 images):*\$55
 Red Schoendienst (166 images):\$830
 Carl Yastrzemski (160 images):\$810

Class of 1990

Joe Morgan (72 images):.....\$360
 Jim Palmer:FUNDED

**108 images have already been digitally preserved thanks to a generous contribution from Peter Hand*

Additional projects online

We are grateful for all our donors and Museum Members for helping us to preserve baseball history. We have accomplished a lot together, but there is more to be done.

Explore additional projects, including artifacts, photographs and Library documents that are in need of conservation and preservation, at our website. 📄

baseballhall.org/museuminaction

For more information – or to make a donation of any amount toward one of the projects – visit baseballhall.org/museuminaction or contact our Development Team at (607) 547-0385 or development@baseballhall.org.

ROOKIE RECALLINGS

From your first year in the big leagues all the way to being a Hall of Famer, you learn a lot.

BY JOHNNY BENCH

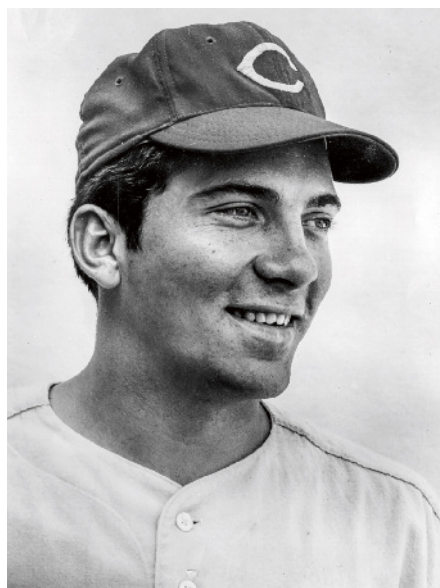
I was 19 years old in August 1967 when I first got the call-up to the big leagues. I drove from (Triple-A) Buffalo to Cincinnati and was immediately put into the lineup by my manager, Dave Bristol, against Dick Ellsworth. I didn't have that much time to think, but I felt like I was supposed to be there. When Dick threw me a fastball in my wheelhouse, I popped it up, but didn't feel overmatched.

The nucleus of the team was guys like Tony Pérez, Pete Rose, Vada Pinson and Deron Johnson, who really welcomed me. My locker was next to Vada, a total class gentleman. He spoke in a quiet voice, sat there and polished his shoes. He loved to have his spikes shining. His locker was meticulous – everything was neat, everything was in its place – as was his preparation. The way Vada went about his business made an impression on me.

Around the batting cages, I knew to keep my mouth shut, but there was no hazing for us young kids. In the dugout, it was Deron Johnson giving me advice. He would say: "Hey kid, you ever see this pitcher before? He's going to try to throw this little slider out there." And Tom Helms helped me get a place to live in a hotel that rented out rooms.

We had coaches who were just terrific, like Whitey Wietelmann and Hal Smith, who was our catching coach. Hal always had the gentlest manner, even with the younger players. He told me, "I don't have to work with you a lot, kid." I can never say enough about Hal.

I wanted to take charge, even my first year in the majors. I remember Milt Pappas saying,



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

Johnny Bench stepped into a regular role upon joining the Reds and was named the NL's 1968 Rookie of the Year.

"He chews me out just like a veteran would," and that's why they gave me the nickname The Little General. I would say, "Hey, let's go, everybody on time, on the field. Let's go!" Looking back, I probably wasn't supposed to do all that in my first year.

Entering my last game of the 1967 season, I only needed two or three at-bats to disqualify myself as a rookie the next year. As fate would have it, before I could get those at-bats, I suffered a [lacerated] thumb on a foul tip against the Cubs. That's what left it open to me becoming Rookie of the Year in 1968.

With my thumb recovered the next spring, I expected to play, and play well. I wasn't thinking about winning awards, but here I am

on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* in the spring of '68 with four other potential Rookies of the Year: Mike Torrez, Alan Foster, Don Pepper and Cisco Carlos.

Don Pavletich was unbelievable in Spring Training that year and won the catching job. Don hurt his right arm in the fifth game in Chicago, and it was the last game he caught that year. I caught the next 54 games in a row without a day off – and caught 152 of the 158 games we had left in 1968.

Winning the 1968 Rookie of the Year Award was special, but the most special part of that season was the All-Star Game at the Astrodome. I'm a 20-year-old All-Star, and I was scared to leave my locker. Then Willie Mays, who was sitting across from me, walked over and said, "You should have been the starting catcher." That made everything right.

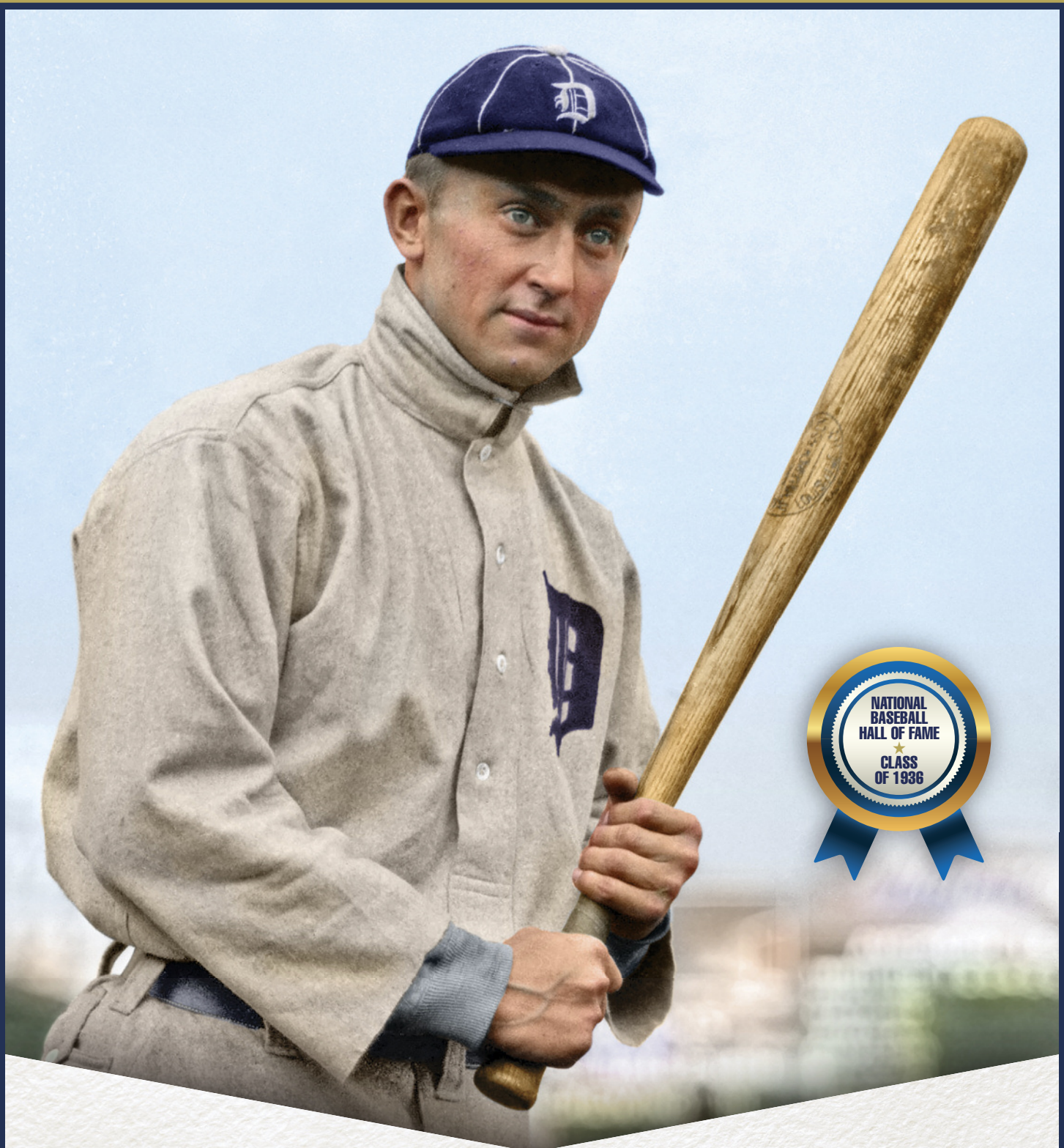
I felt like a rookie again in 1989, when I was inducted into the Hall of Fame. Here I am in Cooperstown, looking at the Hall of Famers around me – guys who were my absolute heroes – and everyone shared their congratulations.

It's a busy weekend for the new Hall of Famers. Everyone's pulling at you, everyone needs a ticket, everyone needs a room. That's why, now, at Induction Weekend, I try to make every new guy feel like he's special, try to make his family feel important – because they are.

I started a tradition with the rookie Hall of Famers to sit them down in a rocking chair at the Otesaga Hotel, overlooking beautiful Otsego Lake. I tell them, "Everything's going a mile a minute. Stop and think about where you are and what you've accomplished." I want them to take the time to let it all sink in.

That's what really makes Hall of Fame Weekend so special – being able to welcome these guys the same way I was welcomed into the Hall of Fame fraternity when I was the rookie. 🍷

Johnny Bench was named National League Rookie of the Year in 1968, launching a career that culminated in his election to the Hall of Fame in 1989.



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cooperstowngetaway.org

Sunflowers and other fall blossoms decorate the Lippitt Farmhouse at the Farmers' Museum at the end of a historic summer in Cooperstown.